

8-2016

Northwest Coast Native American Art: The Relationship between Museums, Native Americans and Artists

Karrie E. Myers

State University of New York Buffalo State, kemyers77@yahoo.com

Advisor

Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D. Associate Professor of History and Social Studies Education Program and Director for Museum Studies

First Reader

Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D. Associate Professor of History and Social Studies Education Program and Director for Museum Studies

Second Reader

Lisa Marie Anselmi, Ph.D., R.P.A. Associate Professor and Chair of Anthropology and Coordinator for Indigenous Studies

Department Chair

Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D. Professor of History

To learn more about the History and Social Studies Education Department and its educational programs, research, and resources, go to <http://graduateschool.buffalostate.edu/programs?bpid=522>.

Recommended Citation

Myers, Karrie E., "Northwest Coast Native American Art: The Relationship between Museums, Native Americans and Artists" (2016). *Museum Studies Theses*. Paper 9.

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/museumstudies_theses



Part of the [American Art and Architecture Commons](#), [American Material Culture Commons](#), [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#), [Archival Science Commons](#), [Art Education Commons](#), [Art Practice Commons](#), [Canadian History Commons](#), [Classical Archaeology and Art History Commons](#), [Contemporary Art Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Fiber, Textile, and Weaving Arts Commons](#), [Metal and Jewelry Arts Commons](#), [Museum Studies Commons](#), [Native American Studies Commons](#), [Other American Studies Commons](#), [Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#), [Painting Commons](#), [Printmaking Commons](#), [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#), [Sculpture Commons](#), [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#), [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

**Northwest Coast Native American Art:
The Relationship between Museums, Native Americans and Artists**

by

Karrie E. Myers

**An Abstract of a Thesis
In
Museum Studies**

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

Master of Arts

August 2016

**SUNY Buffalo State
Department of History and Social Studies Education**

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Northwest Coast Native American Art: The Relationship between Museums, Native Americans and Artists

Museums today have many responsibilities, including protecting and understanding objects in their care. Many also have relationships with groups of people whose items or artworks are housed within their institutions. This paper explores the relationship between museums and Northwest Coast Native Americans and their artists. Participating museums include those in and out of the Northwest Coast region, such as the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the Burke Museum, the Royal British Columbia Museum, the American Museum of Natural History and the Smithsonian Museum. Museum professionals who conducted research for some of these museums included Franz Boas, James Swan, and Frederick Ward Putnum, and they worked with Natives and artists like Charles Edenshaw who influenced later artists including Bill Holm, Bill Reid, Mungo Martin, Willie Seaweed, Robert Davidson and Cheryl Samuel. The relationship is explored by examining different moments in history that occurred between the Northwest Coast's origins and today, as well as the Native art made during these times. Some of these moments include Native contact with outsiders, the era of collecting, the Northwest Coast Renaissance, and the effects of repatriation laws/guidelines. These moments had an effect on the relationship and enabled it to develop into what it is today.

**SUNY Buffalo State
Department of History and Social Studies Education
Northwest Coast Native American Art:
The Relationship between Museums, Native Americans and Artists**

**A Thesis in
Museum Studies**

by

Karrie E. Myers

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

Master of Arts

August 2016

Approved by:

**Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of History and Social Studies Education
Program Director for Museum Studies
Chairperson of the Committee/Thesis Advisor**

**Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D.
Chair and Professor of History and Social Studies Education**

**Kevin J. Miller, Ed.D.
Interim Dean of the Graduate School**

THESIS COMMITTEE SIGNATORY

Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of History and Social Studies Education
Program Director for Museum Studies

Lisa Marie Anselmi, Ph.D., R.P.A.

Associate Professor and Chair of Anthropology
Coordinator for Indigenous Studies

Acknowledgements

I have received tremendous support during this project and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest thanks to certain individuals and institutions who have helped me throughout this process. Without their help, this paper would not have been possible.

To my advisor, Dr. Cynthia Conides, thank you for your guidance throughout my entire graduate school career, especially during the writing of this paper; your support and advice has been invaluable. To Dr. Lisa Marie Anselmi, thank you for your insight and knowledgeable instruction which has been extremely beneficial. To Aaron Glass at Bard Graduate Center and Karen Duffek at the UBC Museum of Anthropology, thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. To Laila Williamson, Kristen Mable, and everyone at the American Museum of Natural History, thank you for opening your doors to me, giving me access to the collections and archives so I could understand my topic that much more. Thank you for also allowing me to use images of pieces in your collection in my paper. To the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University and the University of Washington Press, thank you for allowing me to use some of your images as well.

My family and friends also need to be recognized, because they were truly my support system throughout this endeavor. First, to Mom, Dad and Justin, thank you for *always* being there for me and with me, no matter what, whether we were hundreds of miles apart or sitting right next to each other! Thank you for always having faith in me! To Tamara, thank you, thank you, thank you! Your help has been beyond valuable. You are amazing! To Erika, thank you for taking the time to talk when I needed to and for your encouragement. And lastly, I need to thank David. David, thank you for being my rock. This has been a long and, at times, difficult path. Thank you for not letting me give up. You have no idea how much your support means to me.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	3
Section 1: Defining Northwest Coast Art.....	3
Section 2: Early Collecting and Changes in Museum Practices	12
Section 3: Northwest Coast Native Response and Renaissance.....	17
Chapter III: Northwest Coast Origins.....	23
Chapter IV: Prehistoric Northwest Coast Art.....	31
Chapter V: Contact with Outsiders	42
Chapter VI: Northwest Coast Art after Contact	49
Chapter VII: The Era of Collecting	72
Chapter VIII: Northwest Coast Art in the Twentieth Century.....	85
Chapter IX: Contemporary Art, Public Programming and Relationships ..	105
Chapter X: Conclusion.....	122
Bibliography.....	133

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Map 2. Northwest Coast Native Groups, c. 1900. Oweekeno to Tlingit.....	27
Figure 2. Map 1. Northwest Coast Native Groups, c. 1900. Chinook to Kwakwaka'wakw....	28
Figure 3. Box (Bentwood Box)	39
Figure 4. "Swift Blanket," Ceremonial Raven's Tail Design Blanket.....	41
Figure 5. Webber, John. Interior of Habitation at Nootka Sound.....	45
Figure 6. Webber, John. Interior of Habitation at Nootka Sound.....	45
Figure 7. Copper Plate	47
Figure 8. Chilkat Blanket	52
Figure 9. Pattern Board, Blanket.....	54
Figure 10. Chilkat Blanket (the weaver's tie-off signature)	57
Figure 11. Dancing Blanket (Button Blanket)	58
Figure 12. Spoon, Crane	59
Figure 13. Rattle (Raven Rattle)	63
Figure 14. Hat, Chief's, Crow.....	65
Figure 15. Screenshot of the American Museum of Natural History's Anthropology Collections Database	113
Figure 16. Screenshot of the Burke Museum's Ethnology Collections Database	113
Figure 17. Screenshot of the U'mista Cultural Society's U'mista Collections.....	114
Figure 18. Screenshot of the Reciprocal Research Network's homepage	115

Chapter I: Introduction

Museums, acting as caretakers of collections and places of learning, need to have an informed understanding of the items they store and care for, as well as a relationship with the descendants of the people who made them, in order to preserve them to the best of their ability. This is especially true for anthropological museums and collections that work with living communities as people are just as important as the objects.

But where do these relationships come from? How are they formed and when do they begin? How does their past relate to the present? In order to understand how museums interact with the makers of their collections, these questions must be answered. To begin the process of answering these questions, the present work takes a case study approach and focuses on one cultural region, the Northwest Coast. Northwest Coast people have ongoing relationships with museums, and they have a diverse, rich and lengthy past.

Generally, all Native American groups have a problematic past due to contact with outsiders. Native Americans have lived in the Americas for thousands of years, but outsiders began spreading their western standards to the Natives once they settled on their lands. Both positive and negative situations occurred due to contact, including exchange and the westernization of Natives, but overall, Natives all across the North American continent endured many hardships for hundreds of years and the impact continues to resonate in the 21st century.

This paper focuses on the cultural region of the Northwest Coast, which consists of various Indigenous cultures. The Native and non-Native interactions in the region today are fascinating and is a model for other regions. Their interactions today have afforded everyone, including Canadians, Americans and Natives, plus the public, greater benefits.

The relationship between museums and Northwest Coast Native Americans and artists today is defined by pivotal moments in history, both positive and negative. It has, however, developed into a productive and beneficial one, and these groups are hopeful this will continue into the future. The key moments will be discussed throughout the paper in order to support the influence they had on the relationships, especially the knowledge each group has gained, which has been, and will continue to be, beneficial to themselves as well as the general public.

This paper is written mostly with the art and artists of the Northwest Coast in mind. Northwest Coast Native American artists had, and still have, very influential roles in their respective cultures. As Native artist Dempsey Bob has said, "In a way, artists were like the leaders in our society because they made the culture visible. Art lifts people's pride. Art makes you see who you are. It reflects the culture, and culture is what you do, where you live, what you believe."¹

¹ Kari Chalker, Lois S. Dubin, and Peter M. Whiteley, eds., *Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004), 96.

Chapter II: Literature Review

To gain an understanding of the relationship between museums and Northwest Coast Native Americans, it is important to first understand its history. There are many published sources on Northwest Coast cultures, beginning with early European explorers who visited the Northwest Coast and wrote down their first impressions. These sources are important and inform how the relationship changed and why it is what it is today.

The literature review is organized into three sections: 1) Defining Northwest Coast Art, 2) Early Collecting and Changes in Museum Practices, and 3) Northwest Coast Native Response and Renaissance. Providing a definition of what Northwest Coast art is and what it means assists in understanding why museums wanted to amass items for their collections. Without collections, there would be no interaction with the Native communities. The sources presented herein will provide differing opinions regarding these issues to assist with ultimately understanding why this relationship is significant.

Section 1: Defining Northwest Coast Art

What is Northwest Coast art? If a Native person and a museum professional are asked this question today, both may have different answers. In fact, there is not just one answer. The answer differs depending on individual and cultural perspectives. This section will explore who has defined Northwest Coast art and how the definition has changed over time.

The best place to begin this discussion is to explore whether Native objects are considered 'art' or 'artifact.' As Aldona Jonaitis, current Director of the University of Alaska Museum of the North² and anthropology professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks,³ explains in her book *From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History*, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, non-Natives disliked the Natives and their cultures. They projected these feelings onto the pieces that the Natives were making which gave them negative connotations as well. To them, these objects were just that: objects of material culture. At this time, non-Natives did not find anything aesthetically pleasing about these items and categorized them as functional items. Because of this view, researchers and collectors began accumulating them to be placed in natural history museums instead of fine art museums.⁴ In a 2006 publication, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, Jonaitis expands on what she first wrote in *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, which was written in 1988. She explains that during the first half of the twentieth century, a transition had occurred in which non-Natives began to appreciate these items as more than just objects. This change in thinking allowed for fine art exhibits devoted to Native art to emerge.⁵

² University of Alaska, *Organizational Charts & Biographies*, <http://www.alaska.edu/orgcharts/uaf-chancellor/vc-acad-affairs/dir-ua-museum/>.

³ Douglas & McIntyre, Aldona Jonaitis, <http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com/author/aldona-jonaitis>.

⁴ Aldona Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1988), 55.

⁵ Aldona Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 238.

Today, there is still much discussion about this topic, especially within Native communities. In the article “Indian Art vs. Artifact: Problem of Ambiguity,” Michael Kimmelman also considers the issues of this subject matter. At the time Kimmelman wrote the article in 1989, pieces were still being exhibited in natural history and anthropological museums (and they still are today), and some Natives, like Robert Houle were “[...] enraged and saddened by the thought that [his] work at the museum [would] be curated simply as material culture and not as a legitimate contemporary work of art, and perception of it [would] be labeled as ethnic.”⁶ On the other side of this debate, some researchers, like the art historian Ruth B. Phillips, thought that objects needed to be placed into a context, and by placing them in an art museum, the ceremonial purpose of the object is eliminated.⁷ Some artists, like Doreen Jensen, regard their creations as both ceremonial items and art. Kimmelman brings up the idea that Natives themselves do not agree on an answer to this question just as anthropologists, curators and researchers do not, and that most Natives agree the debate of ‘art vs. artifact’ is a western construct.⁸ There are many factors that go into determining an answer to this question of art versus artifact. Again, it depends on when the pieces were made, what the purposes of the pieces are (practical, ritualistic, fine art), who is being asked this question, and when they are being asked this question. There

⁶ Michael Kimmelman, “Indian Art vs. Artifact: Problem of Ambiguity,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1989, accessed March 9, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/01/arts/indian-art-vs-artifact-problem-of-ambiguity.html>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

does not seem to be a clear answer, and maybe there never will be. This historical perspective impacts the relationship today because both museum professionals and Natives can understand each others' perspectives for a healthy exchange, enabling them to work together to the benefit of both.

There are other ways to define Northwest Coast Art, and defining it by association seems to be one way in which researchers write about it. For example, in Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips' book *Native North American Art*, they organize art by the major North American Culture Areas where Natives reside, including the Southwest, the East, the West, the North, and the Northwest Coast. They organize art even further by region within this Culture Area; the Northwest Coast is divided culturally into Northern, Central, and Southern regions (this division into cultural regions is actually more of an anthropological construct than a formal segmentation established by the Indigenous cultures), and they arrange the art found in each of these regions by the different activities associated with it. For the Northwest Coast, specifically, they examine art made for shamanism, crest art, and the potlatch, which were/are all made for practical reasons.⁹

In *Art of the Northwest Coast*, Jonaitis also comes at this topic from a similar direction. She explores art in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions, and then breaks those regions down even further into the different cultures from those regions, such as Southwestern Coast Salish and Southern Coast Salish

⁹ Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

from the Southern region, the Haisla and Kwakwaka'wakw from the Central region, and the Tsimshian and Haida from the Northern region. She then discusses art associated with each of these groups. She also considers art associated to different activities if it is important to that group, like shamanism in Tlingit and Tsimshian cultures.¹⁰ Defining art by association is an important perspective, especially when it comes to museums and how they display these items within an exhibit. This topic will be discussed further in the next section.

Formal analysis has played a major role in defining Northwest Coast art as well. In the article "Facing the Future, Envisioning the Past: Visual Literature and Contemporary Northwest Coast Masks," Margaret B. Blackman, an anthropology professor at SUNY Brockport,¹¹ analyzes the use of visuals, including photographs and books of art from the Northwest Coast, by contemporary Native artists to create more traditional pieces.¹² This idea explores alternate ways that artists can educate themselves on the art of their ancestors. Many people have written formal analyses, which, whether intentionally or not, have helped contemporary artists to re-learn art styles that may have been lost. Franz Boas was one of the first to write about this subject. In his book, *Primitive Art*, he discussed general styles and elements for primitive art of all kinds. In the chapter on the Northwest Coast, he examined the art by dividing them into two distinct

¹⁰ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*.

¹¹ Douglas & McIntyre, Margaret B. Blackman, <http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com/author/margaret-b-blackman>.

¹² Margaret B. Blackman, "Facing the Future, Envisioning the Past: Visual Literature and Contemporary Northwest Coast Masks," *Arctic Anthropology* 27, no. 2 (1990): 27-39.

styles: woman's style, which includes embroidery, basketry, and weaving which he explained is a formal art, and man's style, which includes wood carving and painting which he described as symbolic art.¹³ He explained the meaning behind the forms and designs of specific pieces and talked about identifying designs based on animal characteristics, as well as the usage of space in certain designs. For example, the addition or subtraction of elements in order to fill a whole space. He also talked about specific art forms, including Chilkat blankets, bentwood boxes, baskets, and totem poles, in order to help the reader understand how designs work on specific pieces. Boas was more concerned with explaining the actual designs on art pieces than discussing the artist's process in creating them. This book was written in 1927, after he left his position at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and was working at Columbia University full time. His early trips to the Northwest Coast had happened many years prior, so he was able to write this analytical account on the formal aspects of the art due to all of the time he had spent researching this area, in and out of the field. Since he was able to learn some of this information first-hand, this tells one side of the story, from an ethnographer's position. This differs from Bill Holm, for example, who studied pieces in museums almost half a century later.

Holm wrote his book, *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form*¹⁴ in 1965 after he decided an investigation into these art styles needed to be conducted, as there were no formal rules explicitly voiced before this time.

¹³ Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1927), 183.

¹⁴ Bill Holm, *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965).

Although Boas discussed general elements, shapes and forms used, no formal guide had been written up to this point. Holm's book describes the conventional rules of these art forms. Holm is credited with coming up with the terminology that is still used today, including 'formline' and 'ovoid', and others used to create anatomical features. Holm was a non-Native, but his contributions to this field were so significant that most people did not find this as a negative attribute. Nothing like this book had been written before, and it became the fundamental guidebook for many Northwest Coast Natives who were looking to understand their traditional art in order to re-learn and revive it. One such contemporary Native artist who found this book beneficial was Evelyn Vanderhoop, a Haida weaver:

The designs of the *naaxiin* are bounded by both the pentagonal format and horizontal and vertical warps and wefts used to create a chief's robe. The unique angled ovoid and U-shaped forms are a dialectal variant of the visual language of the Northwest Coast, which has been studied and defined by Bill Holm in his groundbreaking book *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form*. Reading this influential book, I was better able to comprehend the designs that stretched and filled the textile matrix of the *naaxiin*.¹⁵

The reason for the difference between Boas' and Holm's publications seems to be in the time period that they were written. When Boas wrote his book in the early twentieth century, there was not as much of a demand for a guide-like manuscript because he, like other anthropologists, were presenting their research for academia. When Holm wrote his book in the second half of the

¹⁵ "Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form," Burke Museum, April 1, 2015, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.burkemuseum.org/blog/northwest-coast-indian-art-analysis-form>.

twentieth century, Natives began reading it and became more curious about their ancestral traditions, which is why Natives came to refer to it as a manual.

Other researchers also wrote about the formal aspects of the art around the same time as Holm, including Hilary Stewart, who wrote *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast* in 1979. She discussed design styles by cultural group and explained the components of two dimensional art in the Northwest Coast by looking at the basic forms that comprise a design, like ovoids and U forms, and anatomical details including the body, eyes, and ears.¹⁶

Some analytical publications around this time were also written, but with application in mind. Cheryl Samuel, also a non-Native like Holm, wrote her book *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket*¹⁷ in 1982. This book is about the history of and instruction on how to weave Chilkat blankets. Different chapters, especially 'Origin, Ceremony and Design' describe in detail the background of the art form. Similar to those written by Boas, Holm and Stewart, this explores the formal aspects of the art style. Unlike the other publications, this book is a step-by-step guide to actually weaving a Chilkat blanket, where the others were more theoretical. Although Holm did go on to carve and make Northwest Coast style art after his book was published, in this book, Samuel applied the knowledge she gained to make such robes, much of which was experimental. Like Holm, Samuel facilitated the re-establishment of this art form which enabled others to begin

¹⁶ Hilary Stewart, *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979).

¹⁷ Cheryl Samuel, *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket* (Seattle: Pacific Search Press, 1982).

weaving in this style once again. She also wrote a very similar book in 1987 regarding Raven's Tail robes, called 'The Raven's Tail.'¹⁸

Application of the art also comes into play with exhibitions. *The Legacy: Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art*¹⁹ by Alan L. Hoover, Peter L. Macnair, and Kevin Neary is an exhibit catalogue written in 1984 from the 1971 exhibit *The Legacy*, originally on display at the British Columbia Provincial Museum (now the Royal British Columbia Museum) which continued to be on display at other museums throughout that decade. The catalogue portrays artworks from pre-contact to contemporary times, and further divides them into categories of two dimensional art and sculptural art. It even includes explanations for two-dimensional designs as proposed by Bill Holm, as well as biographies of many traditional and contemporary Native artists whose works were included in the exhibit. This is an example of how the definitions of Northwest Coast Art can be seen in more contemporary times. Robin K. Wright believes that, although this catalogue only included Canadian Northwest Coast cultures, excluding Columbia River, Southern Coast Salish and Tlingit cultures, this book is another good example of a text book or guide on the art from the Northwest Coast, which Native artists could find helpful.²⁰ The application of the formal elements of the art style is extremely important. Knowing the theory behind it is not enough, for

¹⁸ Cheryl Samuel, *The Raven's Tail* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987).

¹⁹ Alan L. Hoover, Peter L. Macnair, and Kevin Neary, *The Legacy: Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984).

²⁰ Robin K. Wright, review of *The Legacy: Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art* by Alan L. Hoover, Peter L. Macnair, and Kevin Neary, *American Indian Quarterly* 11, no. 2, Spring, 1987: 169-170.

they need to be put into use and that is what many artists and curators did in the last half century.

Section 2: Early Collecting and Changes in Museum Practices

It can be argued that the relationship between museums and Northwest Coast Native Americans commenced when early traders, whalers and collectors began visiting the Northwest Coast and bought personal souvenirs and amassed items that would form the basis of museum collections. Once items had been collected and brought back to the museums, the curators needed to decide how they would be displayed. These practices shaped the way that everyone, including the museums, Natives, and visitors to the museums, viewed and came to understand the items in these collections. That is why understanding the history and reasons for collecting and the Native and non-Native responses to it are important.

In the 1800's, non-Natives believed that Natives would soon become extinct, and because of this the objects that Natives owned would also be lost; collecting was a response to this idea.²¹ Many researchers, anthropologists and collectors visited the Northwest Coast in order to speak with the Natives to learn more about them and to acquire as many items as they could before their supposed disappearance. The focus of *From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History* is to understand how the collection at the American Museum of Natural

²¹ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 71-73.

History (AMNH) came to be and who was involved. Although Aldona Jonaitis delves deep into this topic and explains everything from the history of the Northwest Coast, to the history of the actual museum, to the collection and those who obtained those items, it is only one side of the story; this book discusses Northwest Coast collecting from the viewpoint of the AMNH only.²² Douglas Cole also examines the history of collecting on the Northwest Coast in *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*. Cole discusses collecting on the Northwest Coast during its peak between 1875-1930. The main collectors involved were people working for museums from around the world who were interested in obtaining items for their collections. Participating museums included those in the United States, Canada, England, France, and Germany. Unlike other books that discuss the history of the Northwest Coast, this book does not go into detail about the Native Americans and their perspectives on the collecting. It is strictly a review of the museum representatives who came to this area to obtain items for use in their institutions and who were motivated by academic interests.²³

Unlike Jonaitis' viewpoint on AMNH, Cole discusses many different collectors from many different museums. He explores who was collecting during this time and for which museums, and how they all interacted with one another. Although Joanitis only spoke about the AMNH, she did discuss how the collecting affected the Natives, whereas Cole left this out of his discussion. Both sides have

²² Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*.

²³ Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

their merit; by including the Native perspective, Jonaitis shares what the Natives went through, which is very important to the discussion about the relationship, so it can be understood how they reacted to the collecting and display of their items in the AMNH. The fact that Cole left this out portrays assumptions that were prevalent at the time of collecting; some researchers did speak with Natives in order to understand the items they were collecting, but collecting, as discussed above, was conducted from the idea that Natives would become extinct, so this book reflects that paradigm well.

Collecting also raised ethical issues. Museum practices, according to Jonaitis, were about collecting as many items as possible. Jonaitis explains how the collector George Hunt, for example, collected a Nuu-Chah-Nulth Whalers Shrine by pretending that he was a shaman who could cure the sick and then buying it from the two Native owners for the AMNH collection.²⁴ Even Boas removed remains from grave sites in order to conduct osteological research²⁵ and some Indigenous people themselves helped researchers remove items. For instance, between 1912-1932, the Tlingit Nobleman Louis Shotridge, who worked for the University of Pennsylvania's University Museum, compelled his own community members to sell precious familial heirlooms.²⁶ Sometimes these questionable collecting tactics were what spurred Natives in the late twentieth century to contact museums with repatriation requests. The problem, as some of these examples illustrate, is that sometimes the Natives had a hand in selling

²⁴ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 182-184.

²⁵ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 208.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

items to museums, which makes the ownership debatable. This could then cause disputes between museums and Natives and create tenuous relationships.

The definition of art as ‘artifact’ in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prompted museums to display objects in natural history museums instead of fine art museums. Once the museums had objects in their possession, they had to decide the best way to exhibit them. The discussion from the previous section regarding how the authors organized their publications also plays a role in how museums display their objects. In the past, natural history museums that had acquired Native American objects began displaying them in the same way specimens and fossils were: chronologically. They would place objects on a timeline, usually beginning with who they considered primitive beings, like the Native Americans, with a progression towards civilized beings, including westernized Europeans. This allowed anthropologists to compare other cultures perceived as less civilized to their own civilized culture.²⁷ Boas did not believe this was the best way to display anthropological items. Instead he arranged the objects by tribe/nation, which he described in detail in his article, ‘Museums of ethnology and their classification.’²⁸ Boas used this method to display Northwest Coast items at the AMNH. This is the same way in which Jonaitis, Berlo, and Phillips organized their books: by cultures within the different

²⁷ Laura Browarny, “Art, Artifact, Anthropology: The Display and Interpretation of Native American Material Culture in North American Museums” (master’s thesis, Seton Hall University, 2010), 7, accessed March 13, 2016, <http://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1736&context=dissertation>

²⁸ Franz Boas, “Museums of ethnology and their classification,” *Science* IX, no. 229 (June 24, 1887): 612-614.

geographical regions of the Northwest Coast. This model has significance; although it may not be accepted by every museum today, it is widely accepted, and has remained in use for more than a century. By displaying items by cultural group, museums are simplifying many complex cultures down to the geography/climate in which the Indigenous people lived. By simplifying it this way, it also portrays that the exhibits were/are intended for the average person, who may not have any prior knowledge of the Native cultures, instead of being intended for the Natives and scholars.

Museum practices in contemporary times must also be examined. After artists began re-learning and creating works in the second half of the twentieth century, museums began acquiring contemporary works to include in exhibits. Many of these exhibits showcased both historical items as well as contemporary ones in order to show the public that the art and cultures still existed. Travelling exhibits became tremendously important around this time in order to spread this message. *The Legacy*, and *Totems to Turquoise* both became travelling exhibits, and both included exhibit catalogues to accompany them, and the exhibits also included historical pieces alongside contemporary ones. In the exhibit catalogue, *Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest*,²⁹ the editors, along with other writers, begin by explaining the history of the Northwest Coast cultures and the adornment arts created there. Essays by contemporary Northwest Coast artists then follow this historical overview and these artists share their personal stories about why and how they do what they

²⁹ Chalker, Dubin, and Whiteley, eds., *Totems to Turquoise*.

do. Both exhibits, although exhibited and written at different times, (*The Legacy* was exhibited in 1971 and written in 1984, and *Totems to Turquoise* was exhibited and written in 2004) show the positive path that museums have taken in exhibiting works associated to individual artists. By working directly with Indigenous people, the relationship can flourish because, for example, Indigenous people can have a say in what happens to their objects, and how and in which context they are being displayed.

Section 3: Northwest Coast Native Response and Renaissance

Collecting practices and interactions with Europeans impacted Indigenous cultures fairly early post-contact. Before the arrival of Europeans, Natives in the Northwest Coast had been trading with other Native groups, including those in the subarctic and Plateau cultures, which may explain why Northwest Coast Native Americans participated so willingly in trade with the Europeans. After contact with outsiders, the amalgamation of European and Native cultures could have initiated Native acculturation. Margaret B. Blackman argues that although some researchers and anthropologists, including Wilson Duff and Erna Gunther, believed that the social organization was destroyed mainly by the hands of the church, acculturation was not always a negative thing. For example, Blackman writes that when ethnographer John R. Swanton visited the Haida in 1900-1901, he stayed with Henry Edenshaw and his family, who were one of the most acculturated families in Masset on Haida Gwaii. Edenshaw wore white man's clothing, spoke English, was a member of the church, and even translated the

Bible into Haida.³⁰ This shows a major influence of the missionaries and the church on the Haida, and in a broader sense, most Northwest Coast Native Americans since many groups also joined the church. Frederica de Laguna also states that some Natives did have the choice, and chose to assimilate. She states that the Tlingit adopted the opportunities that were presented and which were advantageous to them.³¹

For many, acculturation became a way of life and it was the *only* way of life that many Natives knew. Many children who grew up in the late 1800's and early 1900's were sent away to boarding schools for Natives run by the church. The Gladstone/Reid family is a well-known Native family that exemplifies acculturation. In her book, *Bill Reid: The Making of an Indian*, Maria Tippet discusses the Native artist Bill Reid and begins by exploring the pasts of his mother, Sophie Gladstone, and grandmother, Josephine Ellsworth, as a way to explain Bill Reid's history. Sophie Gladstone, along with other children from Skidegate on Haida Gwaii, travelled to southern British Columbia in 1905 to attend a boarding school. She was only ten years old at that time and because she was young, the school, which focused heavily on religious study, influenced her greatly. When she married a white man, Billy Reid, some years later and they had children of their own, everything she learned from her white schooling was passed on to her children. During a few periods in her life, Sophie and her

³⁰ Margaret B. Blackman, "Creativity in Acculturation: Art, Architecture and Ceremony from the Northwest Coast," *Ethnohistory* 23, no. 4 (Autumn, 1976): 387-413.

³¹ Ibid.

children lived in Victoria, British Columbia where Sophie tried her best to live the life of a white woman. She realized that being known as a Native in Victoria would give her children a disadvantage, so she hid her Native heritage by dressing herself and her children in western clothing, and sent her children to white private schools from a young age. Although she tried to hide this from the Victoria community, she did not abandon her ancestry. She stayed in contact with her family, who visited them occasionally, and whom Sophie and her children would visit in return. Sophie sometimes even wove small baskets and even continued wearing silver bracelets made by her father and other Natives.³² Awareness is the key to this story; Sophie knew that she needed to act like she was white in order to live the life she wanted, both for herself and her children. By exploring Bill Reid's parentage in this publication, Tippet delves into the topic of acculturation. She brings awareness to the fact that what happened to Natives and their families in the past plays into who the artists and Natives are today and how they see the world. Acculturation may not have seemed dangerous at the time, because that was how they were raised. This, however, could be why Natives in the mid to late twentieth century spoke out about their changing cultures; they had more rights than their parents and grandparents, which enabled them to discover how their cultures should have been and should be treated.

³² Maria Tippet, *Bill Reid: The Making of an Indian* (Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 2003), 25-36.

During what is sometimes referred to as the 'Northwest Coast Renaissance,' which occurred in and around the 1960's, many Native artists began returning to their ancestral art forms, much of which they had to re-learn due to abandonment and loss during times of suppression by the church and government. In order to do this, many Natives visited museums to look at objects in their collections; this enabled them to understand the complexities of the works and to learn how they were made. Bill Holm and Cheryl Samuel should also be mentioned in this context as well. Although they are both non-Natives, the museums played an integral role in helping them to write their books, by allowing them to look at their collections. Many Natives also visited museums, like the Musqueam people, who wanted to understand how their traditional Coast Salish weavings were made. Many visited the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology which houses a large collection of these blankets, since the museum was erected on Musqueam land. From this interaction eventually came a sourcebook which relays the history of Salish weaving and highlights individual contemporary Musqueam artists who began a weaving school to teach what they had learned, which began from their visits to the museum.³³ Natives who used the museums to their advantage during this 'Renaissance' period, as well as later and even today, seem to understand the importance of having a mutually beneficial affiliation with museums.

³³ "Musqueam Weavers: Musqueam Weaving Through the Personal Stories of Weavers," Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. <http://moa.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sourcebooks-Weavers.pdf>.

Although many Indigenous people were happy to work with museums around this time, there were others who disliked them. In general, these Natives believed that museums had stolen items from their ancestors and their lands to be placed in and forgotten about in museums. One specific example of this, as described by Jonaitis, occurred in 1921, when the Kwakwaka'wakw hosted an extravagant potlatch, which was a ceremony that the Canadian government had banned in an 1884 amendment³⁴ to the Canadian Indian Act of 1876, which stated the legal status and rights of Native Americans in Canada.³⁵ When the government found out about the illegal potlatch, many of the items that were used during the ceremony were confiscated and dispersed to museums around the world.³⁶ Potlatching in Canada was legalized once again in 1951 and discussion regarding the 1921 potlatch ensued. Natives argued that the items were taken under pressure by the Indian agents. Eventually, some years later, museums began repatriating items from their collections which were collected from this potlatch.³⁷ Repatriation continued, during which time Natives and museums were asked to work together, according to the United States' law the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA)³⁸ and Canada's report called *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between*

³⁴ An Act Further to Amend "The Indian Act, 1880," *Statutes of Canada* 1884 (47 Vict.), chap. 27, sec. 3.

³⁵ The Indian Act, 1876. *Statutes of Canada* 1876, chap. 18.

³⁶ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 224.

³⁷ Ibid., 285.

³⁸ *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*, Public Law 101-601, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 104 (1990): 3048-3058.

Museums and First Peoples,³⁹ (which is not an actual law) to understand which items could be repatriated, and which items were legally purchased by, and could stay in, museums.

Although many museums lost decent portions of their collections to repatriation, new possibilities for exchange between museums and Natives opened up. The exhibits mentioned previously, *The Legacy* and *Totems to Turquoise*, as well as others including *HuupuKwanum Tupaat: Out of the Mist: Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs* at the Royal British Columbia Museum in 1999-2000 and the *Gathering Strength: New Generations in Northwest Coast Art* at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology in 1999, are good examples of what came out of the 'Renaissance' and repatriation, due to the interaction between museums and Indigenous peoples. Anita Herle discusses *Out of the Mist* and *Gathering Strength* because she believes these are two great examples from museums on the Northwest Coast that are working in collaboration with their Native neighbors, although she does wish more museums across the country and internationally could do the same.⁴⁰ All of these examples show that museums and Natives are working together to tell the stories of the Natives and individual artists, and they are making sure the information in

³⁹ The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*, (Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association and Assembly of First Nations, 1992).

⁴⁰ Anita Herle, "Objects of Transformation in Northwest Coast Museology," *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, No. 14 (2002):38-59.

the exhibits and exhibit catalogues are accurate. This also ensures that the Natives are actively participating in the exhibits about their cultures.

There is no doubt that most of the concepts presented in this literature review demonstrate that a positive relationship between museums and Natives/Native artists can be established. It has, in fact, already transpired in many museums, most especially in those located on or near the Northwest Coast. Although this is the case, as these sources have indicated, there have been, and will be, others that do not agree with these ideas and do not wish to work together, whether it be a museum or a Native American nation. There will always be two sides to this story, but if some Natives and museums can continue to work together, then there is a possibility that other Natives and museums will follow suit.

Chapter III: Northwest Coast Origins

Northwest Coast Native Americans, and Native Americans in general, have been living in the Americas for thousands of years. They have been through good times, as well as many challenging times, and who they are today is based upon what happened to them in the past. The most logical place to start this discussion, therefore, is at the beginning, when they first came to settle on the North American continent.

Humans first arrived in the Americas sometime between 20,000-13,000 years ago when a land bridge, Beringia, was exposed after sea levels decreased when ice sheets formed across northern North America. Asiatic people used this land bridge to cross over into the Americas and they spread throughout the

continent as well as into South America. Because of the glaciers, people could not easily settle on the Northwest Coast until about 13,000 years ago when the ice sheets began to melt and a tundra-like environment began to cover the area. Around 12,000 years ago, forests appeared along the coast, which provided animals with enough shelter and sustenance allowing them to move north into the area. Humans followed the migrating animals as they were a food source. The humans mostly settled along waterways from the mainland, as well as on the islands off the coast. Since the environment was not yet completely stable, these Northwest Coast Native Americans relied mostly on hunting and gathering. Since they had to follow their food as they migrated, these early Indigenous peoples most likely lived in small, nomadic bands and were probably egalitarian in political organization.⁴¹

By 3,500 BC, the environment and sea level began to stabilize and the Northwest Coast formed the region we know today.⁴² At this point it can be described as the land and islands along the west coast of northern North America, about 1,500 miles long, from the Copper River in Southern Alaska down to southern Oregon, which also extends east to a range of inland mountains and isolates the region from areas farther east on the continent (Figures 1 and 2).⁴³ The climate is based off of the Japanese Current, which flows from Micronesia and the Philippines north along the Asian coastline and eastward across the Bering Sea and then south along the western North

⁴¹ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 17.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 175.

American coastline. This current brings with it warm vapor which, when it hits the shoreline, is coerced up towards the mountains where the moisture content increases until it is heavy enough to rain. This also creates mild to moderate temperatures. All of these factors combined generate a specific type of land vegetation, where fir, spruce, redwood, hemlock, yew and different species of cedar trees grow, as well as mosses and ferns, which cover the forest floor.⁴⁴

Because of this stability, many aquatic fauna appeared in the area, especially several species of salmon, an anadromous fish. These fish are born in freshwater, like rivers, swim to the ocean in their first year of life, and after living for three to five years in the ocean, they turn around and return to their birthplace to reproduce and die.⁴⁵ At times during their migration, so many salmon would swim upstream that it was the perfect opportunity for Natives to catch them for food. They prepared salmon by smoking or drying, as well as eating the fish fresh.⁴⁶ Other aquatic foods became available around this time as well, such as clams, mussels, sea urchins, crustaceans, seals, sea lions, whales, as well as the sea otter, which would later become a highly valuable commodity.⁴⁷ It became apparent to some that certain fishing spots were better than others and these spots came to be owned by certain families/lineages, which in turn made these people wealthy. All of this consequently created a shift in social order and

⁴⁴ Harry B. Hawthorn, *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1965), 4-5.

⁴⁵ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 17.

⁴⁶ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 3.

⁴⁷ Hawthorn, *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast*, 5-6.

a more hierarchical class system began to replace the egalitarian system that previously existed.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 18.

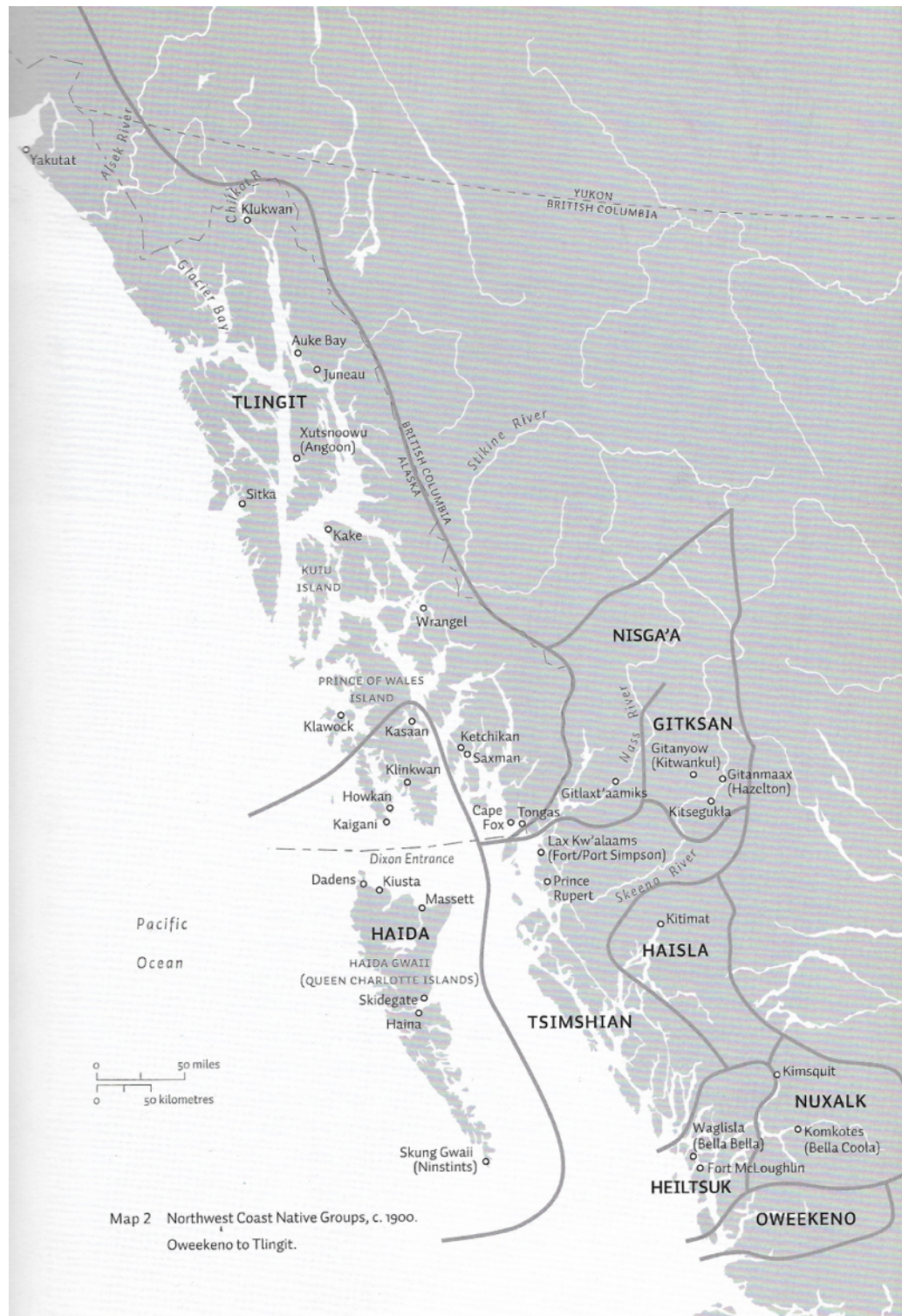


Figure 1. Map 2. Northwest Coast Native Groups, c. 1900. Oweekeno to Tlingit. Jonaitis, Aldona. *Art of the Northwest Coast*. pp. x, xi © 2006. Reprinted with permission of the University of Washington Press.



Figure 2. Map 1. Northwest Coast Native Groups, c. 1900. Chinook to Kwakwaka'wakw. Jonaitis, Aldona. *Art of the Northwest Coast*. pp. x, xi © 2006. Reprinted with permission of the University of Washington Press.

These new food staples, along with the deer, berries and other plants they had been hunting and gathering for some time, allowed them to preserve food for the winter months. The Indigenous people could now move away from having a nomadic lifestyle and could replace it with a sedentary one where they could settle in permanent villages.⁴⁹ By 500 CE, relatives were living together in communal cedar plank houses along the beaches.⁵⁰

These new societies developed a hierarchy with a ranking system of chiefs, nobles, commoners, and slaves. A chief came to his position of power through prestige rather than through domination and only ruled over his own village.⁵¹ Chiefs made decisions such as when to move to a new area if the local resources had been depleted, were asked if a marriage would be deemed acceptable, and they gave the final say on who could claim rights to a certain resource.⁵²

These villages were mostly comprised of families, or kin groups, who received inheritance through the matrilineal (mother's) line in the northern tribes, and bilateral descent (through both the mother's and father's line) in the southern tribes. The eldest son obtained the highest rights of his kin group.⁵³ These privileges included rights or claims to specific resources, like fishing grounds or other physical items like boats, fine clothing, and lavish houses, as well as other,

⁴⁹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 3.

⁵⁰ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 18.

⁵¹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 4.

⁵² Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 21.

⁵³ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 20.

more impalpable things like stories, dances, songs, and crests.⁵⁴ A crest is identified as:

An anthropomorphic or zoomorphic being, an inanimate object such as a rock, or even a meteorological event such as a rainbow, with which an ancestor had interacted in the mythic past, and who had bestowed upon that ancestor the right to tell the story of that encounter, to use regalia such as masks, to perform dances, and to portray the crest's image in art.⁵⁵

These crests are extremely important in the overall history of the Northwest Coast, specifically in their art. Since families/lineages held claims over certain crests and were allowed to use them, they began to represent them in physical form. These crest items were very special to the kin group who owned them, and they kept them hidden away in boxes in their houses. Examples of items that depicted crests include headdresses, robes and coppers, which were only taken out for special feasts. The crests were also prevalent on the houses, painted on the interior house posts as well as the exterior façades. These house posts explained not only the family's right to display them, but also told the origin stories of that specific crest.⁵⁶ Before 500 CE, crest art was very different from the "traditional" style we know of today from the nineteenth century; crests were less refined and not as elegant in form as those that would come later. Much of this was due to the tools used to make them, which were made from stone, bone and teeth and produced something that looked much different than items made with metal tools, which were produced later. For example, zoomorphic beings

⁵⁴ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

were rudimentarily depicted before 500 CE compared to later representations of the same beings which were portrayed much more ornately. After 500 CE, the styles began to resemble the Northwest Coast art we are now familiar with.⁵⁷

Chapter IV: Prehistoric Northwest Coast Art

Northwest Coast art is usually divided by geographical region: Northern, Central, and Southern. Each region had similarities in art styles, but each is differentiated based on things like the materials that were available to the artists, as well as stylistic choices, utilitarian purposes and ritualistic purposes for the art. It should be noted, however, that all the tribes within each of these regions, although have some similarities when it comes to art and culture, are all independent and have their own separate cultures.⁵⁸

The main tribes, each with their own independent culture, from the Northern region include, from north to south, the Tlingit of southeastern Alaska, the Haida of Haida Gwaii (and the southern part of Prince of Wales Island in southeastern Alaska in prehistoric times),⁵⁹ and the Tsimshian on the coast (see Figure 1). Northern art usually includes crest art and artistic pieces used in shamanic rituals. Winter was an important season to those tribes in the north because it was the time to participate in ceremonies and celebrations. They created architectural masterpieces, including domestic structures and totem poles which were carved with crest art, clothing with crest art, and pieces for

⁵⁷ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 18.

⁵⁸ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 178.

⁵⁹ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 18.

performances, including masks and other regalia, in order to tell their families' origin stories.

The Central region includes the Heiltsuk (Bella Bella), Haisla, Oweekeno, Kwakwaka'wakw (formerly referred to as the Kwakiutl), Nuuchahnulth (Nootka), and Nuxalk (Bella Coola).⁶⁰ Traditional territories for these nations are located on the central British Columbia coast, Vancouver Island, and the northwest end of the Olympic Peninsula (see Figures 1 and 2).⁶¹ Art forms, styles and media in this area was comparable to that in the north; ceremonies also played an important part in life and art created in this region reflected that.⁶² Objects collected at the time of contact display designs made up of defined incising, usually on flat surfaces like whalebone clubs. Rows of dots were another important characteristic on these early pieces from the Central region.⁶³

The Southern region includes the Coast Salish and other tribes located around Puget Sound, southeastern Vancouver Island and southern British Columbia, and the Makah, Quileute, and Chinook peoples in Washington and Oregon (see Figure 2).⁶⁴ Basketry and weaving were major art forms here, as well as some woodcarving and art associated with ceremonies, which were not as important to those in the south compared to those in the Central and Northern

⁶⁰ The tribe names in parenthesis indicate names no longer used. Some older publications use these terms to describe them, but they are no longer appropriate according to the modern tribes.

⁶¹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 2.

⁶² Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 178.

⁶³ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 38.

⁶⁴ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 2.

regions.⁶⁵ Since the Southern region had earlier contact with outsiders, prehistoric art traditions changed more quickly here, and this has left us with fewer items to study today.⁶⁶

It is difficult to determine when art in the Northwest Coast first began. Since many of the items made in this area were made from perishable materials, like wood, not many examples of very early art remain. This makes it difficult to estimate the exact date people in this region began creating works of art. This was exacerbated by the wet and humid climate along the coast.⁶⁷ The items that did survive the elements include stone, ivory, and bone.⁶⁸ Scholars believe art on the Northwest Coast goes back at least 5,000 years because the oldest pieces of art found included basketry fragments dating to this time period. They were found along a streambed in southeastern Alaska and after analysis, it was discovered these fragments had an exact weaving technique as those created in the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ This is a major milestone in understanding these cultures; we now know that art goes back farther than scholars originally believed. This find is even more precious because of the material it was made from. It gives researchers hope that more perishable items can be found; items that may be even older, which can give us an even clearer picture of the past.

⁶⁵ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 178.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Erna Gunther, *Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians* (Portland: The Portland Art Museum, 1966), 1-2.

⁶⁸ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 16.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 21.

Around 3500-1500 BCE, people were living similarly to the way their descendants would in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although in a simpler way. This was the time of the Pebble Tool Tradition, and geometric designs were found engraved on tools, many made of stone and other durable materials. Other tools that were found, including adze blades and ground stone chisels, signify that houses were made of wood planks and that woodcarving was a past time. Weavings and baskets were also found in the Fraser River Delta in southern British Columbia dating to 2500 BCE.⁷⁰ By 1000 BCE, people began carving anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms in ivory, stone, and bone. They may have also carved similar images into wood, but it is difficult to discern because of the fast deterioration of wood.⁷¹

Archaeological excavations have been key in learning more about the people from the Northwest. Archaeologists have uncovered important items that provide insights into the early cultures. For instance, the Marpole culture phase, occurring from 400 BCE to 400 CE, was discovered from items located at Marpole, a site in southern Vancouver. It had many similar characteristics to the later cultures in the Southern Northwest Coast region, including the layout of the villages along beaches, as well as early art forms including stone bowls in the shape of anthropomorphic beings that show a remarkable resemblance to pieces from the nineteenth century used in puberty rites.⁷² North of Marpole, in the area of Prince Rupert Harbour, material was found that dates between 500 BCE and

⁷⁰ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 179.

⁷¹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 16.

⁷² Ibid., 16-17.

500 CE. This site also had houses, tools used for woodworking, a social hierarchy, as well as what appeared to be the start of crest art.⁷³

One of the most important finds came in the 1970s when a site which came to be known as Ozette was uncovered and excavated on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state. The site is on the land of the Makah, and around 1500 CE, a mudslide buried part of the village.⁷⁴ The mudslide created an anaerobic, or oxygen-free, environment under the mud, which prevented decomposition and kept the materials in the houses, including the wood and basketry, intact. The excavation was a collaboration between the Makah and Richard Daugherty of Washington State University.⁷⁵ 50,000 items have been recovered, including whalebone clubs, weavings, effigy bowls, and wooden boxes, most of which were decorated.⁷⁶ There were many different styles being used at this site, both abstract and more realistic, and this portrays the variation that existed within communities around this time.⁷⁷

Other research from sites in the north that existed during the first millennium BCE revealed many items that represented idol-like figures, like the raven, who can be found in Northwest Coast origin stories. Scholars believe that by 1000 BCE, all of the essential stylistic components and art forms of traditional Northwest Coast art had been established.⁷⁸

⁷³ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁴ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 180.

⁷⁵ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 20.

⁷⁶ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 180-181.

⁷⁷ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 181.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Many art forms, including carvings, textiles and basketry, were developed during prehistoric times. Although we do not have many examples of woodcarvings from prehistoric times, we do know that it occurred and was a significant part of the culture based on findings from archaeological sites. Many carvers worked with red cedar, but they also used yellow cedar, yew, hemlock, alder, cottonwood and maple, although wood choice varied by tribal nation. Originally, practical items were made from wood, including roasting spits, planks for houses and drying racks for fish, and for the most part all men became carpenters, for there was a need for these items by everyone in the village. They learned how to work with many tools including the knife, hammer, adze, wedge and chisel, but the hardest tool they worked with was the finishing adze, which created a slightly textured finish to the wood. It took an apprentice many months to learn how to work with this tool effectively.⁷⁹

An important characteristic of cedar is how workable it is; people learned that it became very flexible when heated either by hot water or by steam. This is one of the methods in which canoes were created. A tree was cut down, partially shaped, and then filled with water, to which they would add hot rocks until the water came to a boil. The boiling water made the wood flexible and pieces of wood were placed as cross beams through the canoe to widen it. Once the shape was to the canoe maker's satisfaction, the water was drained, the canoe was dried, and then painted decoration was added.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 20.

⁸⁰ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 10.

Houses were also made with split cedar planks. During early prehistoric times, these rectangular plank houses were the main style of house at winter sites, and many times at other sites as well, considering the Natives would generally break down their winter sites and carry everything with them to rebuild at their summer sites.⁸¹ Style of house differed based on geographical location, and although there was some overlap, the styles were different in each region. The Northern region is a bit harder to identify in prehistoric times, but the houses made during historic times had gabled roofs, vertical planks for walls, and were between forty to sixty square feet, and sometimes even larger.⁸² The Central region had shed-roofed houses with horizontal wood planks in prehistoric times, and these were sometimes replaced by gabled-roofs in historic times. These houses were very large, usually between forty to sixty-five feet in width, and up to ninety feet in length. In the Southern region, the Coast Salish constructed both shed-roofed and gabled-roofed houses, and were extremely long, around five hundred feet. These houses were built for extended families and each family group had their own quarters within.⁸³

Carvers also made other important and practical items, including those for food preparation and storage. The wood of choice for these types of items was alder. Alder is a softer wood, but the grain is more even and does not break apart easily. It also does not add an undesirable taste to the food. Bowls, dishes and other containers used for everyday activities were plain and small, and were

⁸¹ Ibid., 4.

⁸² Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 10.

⁸³ Ibid.

usually rectangular in shape with rounded ends and a wide lip. Those used in ceremonies had carved designs and were much larger compared to everyday dishes. Storage containers were also made out of wood, and the most popular form was bentwood boxes (Figure 3). To make these, the woodworker would cut down and adze a cedar board to a certain thickness, and three kerfs, or grooves, would then be cut into the plank almost all the way through. Water was used to soften the plank and heat was then added to the kerfs until the carpenter was able to bend the plank at the kerfs to form right angles. The corners were then sewn together after holes were drilled using withes, or they were joined with wooden pegs. The bottom was created by cutting a flange around the outside of a board with an exact measurement of the box, which would form a mortise joint. Drilled holes would then be fitted with pegs, which would keep the bottom in place.⁸⁴ For the design, especially those made by the Kwakwaka'wakw, Boas has said, "the whole box is considered as representing an animal. The front of the body is painted or carved on the box front; its sides, on the sides of the box; the hind side of the body, on the back of the box [...]. The bottom of the box is the animal's stomach; the top, or the open upper side, its back."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Hawthorn, *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast*, 31-33.

⁸⁵ Boas, *Primitive Art*, 222.



Figure 3. Box (Bentwood Box), Catalog No: 16.1/2422. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

Wood had many other uses as well, including being used for another art form: weaving. As we have discussed above, weaving has been around for at least 5,000 years, and techniques have not changed much since then. This was a woman's art, unlike woodcarving, which was a man's art.⁸⁶ Women would gather other parts of the tree not used by the men, including the inner bark of yellow cedar trees, which they would soften by beating. They would use this beaten-down bark to weave articles of clothing including skirts, blankets and capes. Roots from the spruce tree were also used by splitting them into many pieces until it became a fine thread, and could then be used to weave watertight baskets and hats.⁸⁷

Compared to men's carvings, which were engraved with depictions of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic beings, weavings were less representational,

⁸⁶ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 21.

⁸⁷ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 20.

and the women worked mostly with geometric designs. Many different techniques were used, but the main components of weaving included the warp, which is the vertical framework, and the weft, which is the horizontal component that is wrapped (using many different methods) around the warp. Some techniques used include plaiting, which is when the warp and weft are the same thickness and create a checkerboard effect; twilling, when the weft is wrapped under or over two warps, which creates a diagonal design; coiling, where the basket begins at the base and spirals upward to the sides by sewing together coils of plant fibers; and twining, which is the main technique used throughout the Northwest Coast. Twining occurs when two wefts are twisted around straight warp pieces, over the front and the back, alternately. For every stitch on one warp, one weft goes from the back of the previous warp to the front of the next, and the second weft goes from the front of the previous warp to the back of the next. Many different patterns can be created using any of these techniques.⁸⁸

Women wove on looms which were made up of two vertical wooden poles with one or two horizontal poles across the top from which the warp threads would hang, and were manipulated by the weaver completely by hand. This process took a fairly long time, but in prehistoric times they made simple, geometric designs, which did not take as long as those created later which had zoomorphic and anthropomorphic designs.⁸⁹ Early Tlingit chief robes were made up of yarns made from mountain goat wool. These robes, called Raven's Tail

⁸⁸ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 21-22.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 25.

robes, were produced of black, yellow and white geometric designs. Captain James Cook, an early explorer, collected a few of these robes, and he described them as also having sea otter fur attached to the back. One specific robe called the “Swift Blanket” (Figure 4) that was collected by and named after Captain Benjamin Swift is now a part of the collection at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. It is a fine example of this early weaving style. This robe, and all robes in this category, is rectangular in shape, made exclusively with mountain goat hair and wool, with a broad border that encloses the design field consisting of a black and white geometric motif with thin, yellow horizontal lines, a twined black and yellow inner border, a fringe along the sides and bottom edge, and a fur trim along the top edge for the neckline.⁹⁰

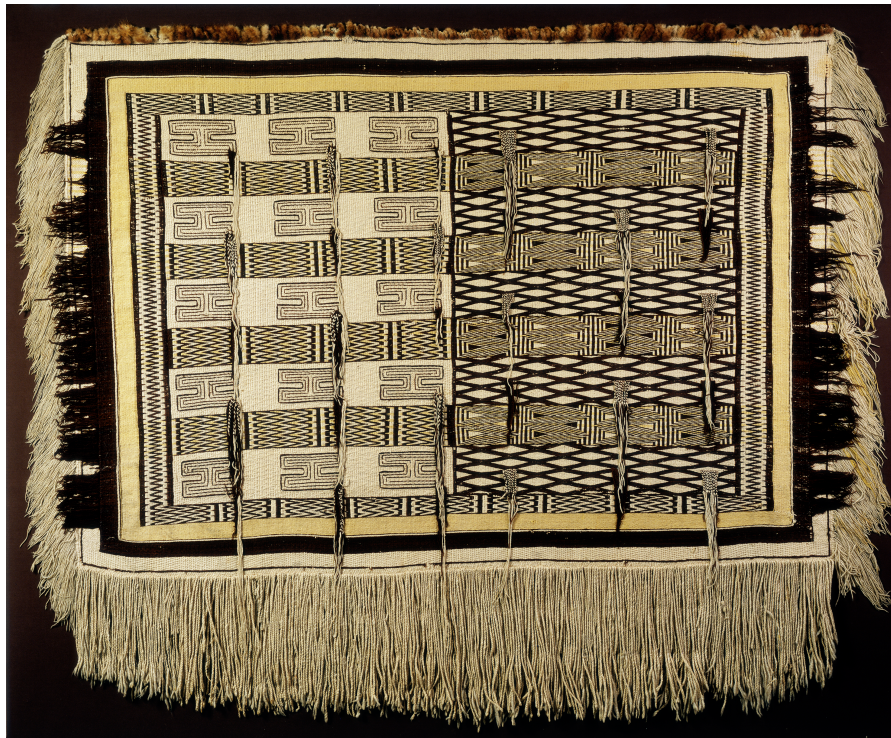


Figure 4. “Swift Blanket,” Ceremonial Raven’s Tail Design Blanket, c. 1740-1760. Gift of Mr. Lewis Hobart Farlow. (c) President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 09-8-10/76401 (digital file #60742763).

⁹⁰ Samuel, *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket*, 76-77.

Northwest Coast Natives who lived during pre-historic times learned to use the materials available in their environment and manipulated them for both utilitarian and ceremonial purposes. They began decorating their items during these prehistoric times as a way to express their newly acquired inherited rights and all of this became the foundation for what they would later create.

Chapter V: Contact with Outsiders

At some point in the eighteenth century a major change occurred in the Northwest Coast: contact with Europeans and outsiders began. Before this time, Native Americans were unaware of the existence of Europeans and other Westerners and were astonished when the first ship arrived carrying these outsiders. Researchers believe that around 150,000 Northwest Coast Native Americans lived in this area before contact.⁹¹ These outsiders had several objectives upon arriving: expansion and power, as well as sea otter furs, which they could sell for considerable amounts of money in China.⁹²

The first non-Natives to arrive were the Russians in 1741. Competition between Russia and Spain related to the explorations and domination of new lands motivated the explorations in the Northwest Coast. The Russian czar put a team together led by Dane Vitus Bering to explore the Northwest Coast. They sailed across the sea between Russia and the western New World (which would be named the Bering Sea, after the explorer) and were the first foreigners to see

⁹¹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 36.

⁹² Ibid.

and explore Alaska. Russia would soon take over lands and claim sovereignty here and found a settlement on Kodiak Island in 1792.⁹³

Seeing Russia's expansion in the New World, Spain began to grow nervous about the possibility of the Russians traveling south to take over Spain's acquired lands in Mexico. To make sure this would not happen, Spain sent its own explorers to settle and take lands on the Northwest Coast. In 1774, a Spanish ship set out from Mexico led by Juan Pérez and eventually made contact with the Haida on Haida Gwaii and Nuu-chah-nulth in Nootka Sound. Pérez began acquiring cultural and artistic material from these Natives, which would become important to the history of the Northwest Coast since they showed the artistic styles of the late pre-contact period.⁹⁴

In 1778, England sailed into the area led by Captain James Cook and also came ashore in Nootka Sound.⁹⁵ This was Cook's third voyage around the world, and the purpose was to discover the Northwest Passage. The British Parliament offered a 20,000-pound reward in 1745 for whoever found a passage by sea from the Hudson Strait on the east coast of North America to the Pacific Ocean on the west coast, allowing the British an easier path to the Far East. Cook sailed East from England on his ship the *Resolution*, where he stopped in New Zealand and then Tahiti, and eventually made his way into Nootka Sound in March 1778.⁹⁶ Cook spent one month there to repair his ship, during which he traded

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 36-37.

⁹⁵ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 20.

⁹⁶ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 37.

objects made of iron and brass owned by his crew for sea otter furs provided by the local Natives.⁹⁷ He also collected innumerable pieces of art and transcribed comprehensive data about the people of the Mowachaht band at a town called Yuquot, in Nuu-chah-nulth territory.⁹⁸ The art he collected still survives today and is included in collections throughout Europe. Some items he collected include combs, blankets, wooden masks and heads, hats, whalebone clubs, weapons, and rattles. Many of these pieces even portray a fair similarity to those found at the Ozette site, indicating a relationship between the Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth cultures. This is another indicator that art styles were mostly established by the time Ozette was buried.⁹⁹

An artist by the name of John Webber was also a member of Cook's crew. He was charged with creating visual representations to go along with the written accounts of the places they visited on their journey. Many of his drawings illustrate the exteriors and interiors of houses, especially in the village of Yuquot. Drawings from this village portray plank houses with flat-roofs sitting on top of shell middens, or mounds, indicating the long habitation of this village. The interior illustrations also give us a glimpse into the life of these people, portraying art in the form of posts carved with anthropomorphic beings, which were later understood by travelers as being ancestral figures, along with clothing and hats, bentwood boxes which contained important ceremonial items, and storage

⁹⁷ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 20.

⁹⁸ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 37.

⁹⁹ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 181.

baskets. Some even portray the act of preparing fish (Figures 5 and 6).¹⁰⁰ Winter ceremonies, unfortunately, are missing from these accounts. These winter ceremonies were extremely important to Northwest Coast Indigenous cultures and early explorers were never, for the most part, present during these times to capture and record data about these seasonal occurrences.¹⁰¹



Figure 5. Webber, John. *Interior of Habitation at Nootka Sound. April 1778*. Gift of the Estate of Belle J. Bushnell. (c) President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 41-72-10/499 (digital file #60741398).



Figure 6. Webber, John. *Interior of Habitation at Nootka Sound. April 1778*. Gift of the Estate of Belle J. Bushnell. (c) President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 41-72-10/500 (digital file #60741399).

¹⁰⁰ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 38-41.

¹⁰¹ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 181-182.

Once repairs on his ship were completed, Cook sailed north into Alaska, where he learned there was no Northwest Passage.¹⁰² Unhappy, he left the Northwest Coast and eventually made it to Hawaii where he died. His crew continued on to China where they sold the sea otter furs they had obtained in the Northwest Coast, some selling for as high as \$120 per pelt. News of the high-profit fur trade spread and motivated other outsiders to journey to the Northwest Coast in the hope of becoming rich.¹⁰³

Russians, Americans, and other Europeans took up this trade, and it was an extremely profitable business for the first few years. Soon, the Native Americans learned they were in control of a very important asset, and because of this began to employ clever trading techniques. Also, a surplus of metal objects the Native Americans obtained for their furs came into the communities and this caused the metal to decrease in value. Both of these occurrences caused the price of furs to increase by the end of the 1700's, which in turn caused European traders to think of new items to trade to the Native Americans. Twisted iron neck rings soon became popular with the Haida, but these did not last long. Soon many of the Northwest cultures asked for copper sheets which they needed to make art pieces called *Tlakwas*, or 'coppers,' shield-like objects that were given away at ceremonies (Figure 7).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 37-38.

¹⁰³ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 20.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-21.



Figure 7. Copper Plate, Catalog No: 16/517. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

Trade in sea otter fur came to an end in the early nineteenth century when the sea otter practically became extinct in this area. European traders were forced to rely on land-based animals for furs, including bear, mink, river otter, and marten. Not long after this was established, European traders traded in their ships for permanent settlements. Many of these settlements became trading posts where local Indians and the European settlers could exchange items. Some Indian groups even left their villages and moved closer to these settlements in order to partake in this enterprise more easily.¹⁰⁵

Another way Europeans worked with Natives was by collaborating solely with one person, usually the chief or highest-ranking person in a village. This cut out the middlemen and made trading much easier. By being the exclusive go-to person, the chief became extremely prosperous, which in turn made him even

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 38-40.

more superior in his village.¹⁰⁶ The wealth that the fur trade brought the chief's family, as well as other families who participated in trading, allowed for more materials to be available to be given away during ceremonies like the potlatch.¹⁰⁷ The potlatch was an important gift-giving ceremony put on by a prosperous member of a tribe in the Northwest Coast, usually a high-ranking official or chief, and was usually held to commemorate some life-altering event, including marriage, acquisition of power, or death. Songs and dances owned by the host or host's family would be performed, and artworks would be put on display or worn during these performances. Copious amounts of food in lavishly carved bowls and spoons were also laid out for attendees to enjoy. At the end of the potlatch, the host would give gifts to everyone, and the acceptance of these gifts authenticated the host's assertions.¹⁰⁸

Some of the new materials that became available included new pigments like Vermilion which created a deeper red than local pigments, trade cloth, Mother-of-pearl buttons, metals used to make tools which enabled them to carve larger totem poles, and silver coins from China.¹⁰⁹ The availability of these new materials caused an increase in the creation of new and innovative artworks that would soon become known as Northwest Coast traditional art.

¹⁰⁶ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 53.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁹ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 182-183.

Chapter VI: Northwest Coast Art after Contact

Art from prehistoric times did not change much after contact with outsiders; technological styles, including carving and weaving, stayed consistent, while the media and surface decoration was modified. Again, the art forms differed slightly from region to region within the Northwest Coast and the Northern, Central, and Southern areas continued to work from their original art forms. With the influence of outsiders, artisans adapted to the times and enhanced what they were already creating. An easy way to look at the art forms after contact is by splitting them into two categories: two dimensional art and sculptural art.

In the Northern region, two-dimensional art was widespread. It was mainly used as surface decoration and designs were painted onto items including boxes, chests, and hats. Two-dimensional art had very specific rules that needed to be followed by the artist and for the most part it was extremely difficult to differentiate designs between groups in both the Northern and Central regions. These designs were made up of two to three different lines; the first was the main formline, which was drawn using a black paint and which outlined the being that was represented, and the other lines helped to further identify the depicted being. Red paint was used to draw the secondary distinguishing characteristics of the creature, and the tertiary characteristics were sometimes drawn with green/blue paints, or in some cases left blank.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 27.

Pigments were created using natural sources, including charcoal and lignite for black pigments, ochre for red/red-brown, and copper for green/green-blue. In historic times, or after contact, other pigments were brought in and traded from the outsiders, including vermillion and blueing, a pigment that the outsiders brought in as a laundry agent. To make the paint, dried salmon eggs were chewed and then spit into a bowl, into which the pigments were then added and mixed together. It was then painted onto the work using a handmade paintbrush, made up of a long cylindrical wooden handle (which was sometimes even carved and decorated as well) and porcupine hairs that were inserted into one end of the handle, which was then bound and cut.¹¹¹

Bill Holm has identified different forms in these designs. As part of the primary black formline, u-forms and ovoids help to define certain anatomical features of the creature being portrayed, including ears and joints. These forms can also be secondary features and drawn in red. Many times, a template was used to create symmetrical designs by drawing half of an ovoid or the design on a folded piece of wood, and once opened, a complete ovoid was seen. Holm has also defined three separate designs that artists used: configurative, expansive, and distributive.¹¹²

Configurative designs are the most easily recognized. The silhouette of an animal with correct proportions was usually displayed and many times represented hereditary crests. These designs did not fill an entire space and are

¹¹¹ Ibid., 28.

¹¹² Ibid., 28-32.

mostly found on spruce-root hats, dance aprons, dance shirts and blankets, and can also be found depicted on Chilkat blankets, where weavers used wooden templates to translate the patterns into the woven blankets.¹¹³

Expansive designs were used when an artist wished to fill up a whole space. To do this, sometimes the artist needed to distort, move around, or completely remove certain features. For example, if an artist wanted to portray a beaver in this way, they would have kept the distinguishing characteristics including prominent incisors and crosshatched tail so it would be recognizable, but they may have removed the front or back legs for it to fit in the space.¹¹⁴

The third design type, distributive, was made when all features were moved around within a design field and there were no identifiable characteristics. This made the design more geometrical than the other two types of designs, which were more natural. Sometimes, there are identifiable features, but often two or more different creatures are depicted, which makes it almost impossible to determine what is being represented.¹¹⁵

Many of the Northern tribes made works with two-dimensional designs. Both the Tlingit and Tsimshian had great weaving traditions. One of the greatest art forms created in these areas was the Chilkat blanket (Figure 8). Although it is named after one of the three Tlingit tribes that wove these garments, Chilkat blankets were originally created by the Tsimshian.¹¹⁶ The process for creating

¹¹³ Ibid., 29-31.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 31-32.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁶ Samuel, *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket*, 22.

these blankets was shared through intermarriage between families and tribes. Although the Tsimshian called these garments “gus-halai’t” and the Tlingit called them “Naaxiin,” Europeans were the ones that dubbed these beautiful creations “Chilkat” in the late 1800s, most likely because many women from the Chilkat villages were producing them.¹¹⁷ They were worn as ceremonial regalia by high-ranking members during ceremonies as a way to show their prestige and wealth, and were also worn during dances. One had to inherit the right to wear one of these blankets.¹¹⁸



Figure 8. Chilkat Blanket, Catalog No: 16/350. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

Like those weavings created in prehistoric times, Chilkat blankets were woven on simple looms and used a weft and warp weaving technique. The difference between these blankets and prehistoric weavings was in the design.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 32-35.

No longer were the women weaving just geometric shapes; they were creating two-dimensional designs, usually in the form of crest art. The blankets can usually be categorized as configurative or distributive. Some dancing blankets have very realistic motifs and can be easily identified, which means they are configurative designs, but are not as common. The more common type is distributive, as well as the sub-category, paneled distributive. To fit a crest or design into the design field, sometimes it needed to be re-arranged making it more difficult to recognize. In a paneled distributive design, the design field was split up into three sections, with the largest of the three in the middle with a smaller section on each side. Each panel had its own distributive design related to the principal figure, which made up the central section. This figure, which can be difficult to discern at first, can be identified by looking at the main black formline. The white parts become the background and the colors, like red, blue, and green, help to better identify what is represented.¹¹⁹

It took a long time to make one of these blankets. Although women wove them, the men were the ones who crafted the designs. The men would take cedar planks, which they would smooth with an adze, and then paint designs on them. They would usually only paint a design on one side of the board since the blanket would ultimately be symmetrical, and the weaver would reflect that design on the other side. The men would only draw the formline with black paint;

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 38-41.

the women knew what elements and details needed to be added where and with what colors (Figure 9).¹²⁰



Figure 9. Pattern Board, Blanket, Catalog No: 16.1/426. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

Once a woman received the pattern board from a man, she needed to gather her materials. Mountain goat wool was the principal material used in spinning the warp and weft. To make the warp (the vertical pieces that the weft pieces would be woven around) a weaver added inner bark from a yellow cedar tree. She then spun the wool and bark together into an S-Twist by twisting it in a clockwise direction. When she had two of these S-Twists, she then spun them together in a counterclockwise direction to create one Z-Twist. All of this spinning was done by hand and on her thigh and knee. The warp was then hung vertically from the top bar of the loom.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Ibid., 45.

¹²¹ Ibid., 53-55.

The weft was much thinner than the warp, however it still varied in thickness depending on where it was used in the blanket. Weft yarns were also two-ply Z-twists, like the warp, however they did not contain bark and they were rarely spun by hand. Women used spindles and whorls to spin their weft yarns; this made it possible for them to create very thin yarns that would not come apart. The weft yarns were also the ones that were dyed. Before contact, the main colors used were a reddish-black, which was produced using hemlock bark, urine and copper, yellow created from wolf moss and urine, and white which was the natural color of the wool. Soon after contact, a yellow-green color was created, although what they really wanted was to create a blue-green dye for the yarn. This yellow-green dyed wool was made by first placing the yarns in a bath of copper and urine and then into a bath of wolf moss and urine. They eventually made this blue-green dye by boiling blue trade cloth in urine, which they would then dip the yarns into. After about ten minutes, the yarn was removed and placed into the wolf moss bath which would immediately produce a beautiful blue-green.¹²²

Once she had her materials prepared, the weaver could then begin weaving her blanket on a similar loom to the ones used in pre-historic times. The Chilkat dancing blanket is made up of several parts. The heading was the first part to be completed and was made up of a few woven rows which fixed the warps in place for the rest of the weaving process. The side braids were started next and they lay along the sides of the weaving, connected to the outermost

¹²² Ibid., 62-69.

border and the fringe on the outside of the weaving. Next came the borders where the broad black border enclosed a broad yellow border, very similar to prehistoric blankets. Next came the main part of the dancing blanket: the design field. The weaver used the pattern board to duplicate the shapes into her blanket. She worked on one design at a time, from one side of the blanket to the other in order to complete one shape and to make sure everything was symmetrical. If she was creating a paneled distributive design, she divided the blanket into three sections. The shapes the weaver translated from the pattern board into the blanket included circles, sockets with eyelid lines, U-shapes, crescents, and facial features. The Tlingit weavers became experts at creating these shapes, especially the circle which was an extremely difficult feat to accomplish. Once the main design field was completed, she then completed the yellow and black borders, and then the footing, which was similar to the heading. An overlay fringe was then added; these were shorter than the leftover warp pieces hanging from the bottom of the blanket and were added just below the footing. The blanket was then removed from the loom, and another short fringe was added to the sides of the blanket, and a thin piece of sea otter fur was woven into the heading. A technique called warp wrapping would then tie off the corners of the blanket. The weaver wrapped pieces of yarn multiple times around the yarn hanging from the corners. This also became a way for weavers to “sign” their blankets; each weaver used different colors and a different pattern for this tie-off, indicating who created it. The same design was used on both sides of the blanket, mirroring

each other (Figure 10). The final five-sided Chilkat dancing blanket was then completed and ready to be worn and danced by the rightful person.¹²³



Figure 10. Chilkat Blanket (the weaver's tie-off signature), Catalog No: 16/952. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

Although the Tlingit were more well-known for making Chilkat blankets than the Tsimshian who created them, the Tsimshian did not stop making textiles. After contact in the nineteenth century, the button blanket became a popular art form. These were created from the (mostly) blue trade blankets that they received from the traders. They cut designs from colored wool and appliquéd them onto these trade blankets, often using contrasting colors. Buttons, usually made from mother-of-pearl, were then added to outline the

¹²³ Ibid., 137-197.

details on the blanket. The images on these blankets usually portrayed the wearer's crest (Figure 11).¹²⁴



Figure 11. Dancing Blanket (Button Blanket), Catalog No: 16.1/1614. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

Sculptural art in the northern region was a very important and widespread art practice as well. Although the Haida did use two-dimensional art, like spruce root hat painting, they are mostly known for their monumental art and sculpture. They created various types of sculptural pieces, many being items used during potlatches, including carved spoons and bowls, masks and totem poles.¹²⁵

The spoons were made of mountain sheep and goat horn, which they steamed in order to make them flexible and workable. Once they were shaped using a spoon mold and cooled, carvers then took another un-steamed horn and

¹²⁴ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 155.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 158-162.

carved relief designs into them. They would then rivet the end of the steamed and molded spoon to the end of the un-steamed and carved horn (Figure 12).¹²⁶



Figure 12. Spoon, Crane, Catalog No: 16/88. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

Masks, and more specifically humanoid masks, made by the Haida were very naturalistic. Some even seem to be based upon specific people. These masks are very easily recognizable as Haida because they were the only group who made such realistic-looking masks.¹²⁷

Totem poles were thought to have been invented by the Haida in prehistoric times. Only two were known to have been erected in the eighteenth century, but the art form exploded in the nineteenth century in Haida Gwaii and Haida villages of the Kaigani area. One reason for the increase in the carving of totem poles was the competitiveness between chiefs. They wanted to express

¹²⁶ Ibid., 159.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 159.

their wealth in a visual way, and by commissioning and erecting totem poles, this allowed for that expression to be satisfied.¹²⁸

Another reason that totem poles became a popular art form was because of the new tools that became available. With the arrival of the Europeans came the introduction of metal. Before contact, tools used to create smaller wooden sculptures included those made with shell, bone, and stone. It took carvers a long time to complete a piece and they also exerted a lot of energy. Metal tools allowed them to complete a piece in a much shorter amount of time using less energy. This also allowed them to carve much larger, and monumental works, with finer detail.¹²⁹

Totem poles were also associated directly with the houses in Haida villages. They were sometimes attached to the front façades, and some were erected between houses and the shoreline. The beings carved on these totem poles were important because they told the family history of the associated house. Three types of totem poles were common in Haida villages. The first was the memorial pole, which was carved in honor of a deceased member of a village. Usually, a crest figure was carved at the bottom of the pole with a raven or eagle at the top. In between these carvings, the pole was either left blank or rings that mark potlatches were carved. The poles were erected to the side of a house, and each was set slightly apart from one another. The second type of pole was the mortuary pole. These were wide poles with a cavity carved out at

¹²⁸ Ibid., 162-165.

¹²⁹ George F. MacDonald, *Haida Monumental Art: Villages of the Queen Charlotte Islands* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 16.

the top to place a noble's grave box.¹³⁰ When a noble person died, they were dressed in full regalia and placed into a grave box with their beloved crest items.¹³¹ A panel decorated with a painted crest, and sometimes a carving of the crest, covered and sealed the front of the cavity. Sometimes the bottom of the pole was also carved, but many times it was left unadorned. The third type of pole was the house frontal pole and was created as the entrance to buildings. They were attached to the front and middle of a house with a hole at the base as the entrance/exit. Animals and other figures were carved and sometimes painted onto the entire pole, but within a few years, the paint began to disappear after exposure to the weather.¹³²

When carving, no matter what the figure, the Haida stuck to specific design rules. Peter L. Macnair describes the carving of a face: "[...] the eyebrows cover more than half the forehead; the eye-socket is usually ovoid and smoothly concave; the eyelid line is carved in prominent relief; a flat, sloping cheek is evident; and the lips are thick and broad."¹³³

Although the Haida were said to be the inventors of the totem pole, it soon spread to other areas in the Northwest Coast, first to the Tsimshian, then to the Tlingit in the north as well as to the Wakashan in the south.¹³⁴

The Tsimshian were, and still are, great carvers and created many sculptural works. Most Tsimshian sculpture served as crest art, which was an

¹³⁰ Ibid., 25-30.

¹³¹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 165.

¹³² MacDonald, *Haida Monumental Art*, 25-30.

¹³³ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 46.

¹³⁴ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 165.

indicator of the family history. They displayed this crest art on totem poles, which could be seen facing the shorelines of their villages. The Tsimshian had many crests, and more than five hundred have been documented, many of them related to Raven, which was, and still is, an important figure in their culture.¹³⁵ It is also believed that they invented the raven rattle (Figure 13). Although each differed slightly, most rattles included a carved raven with a human laying on its back whose tongue was connected to another bird below the human, which was also on the raven's back. Although the original meaning behind them is unknown, some believe the main bird is that of Raven, whose grandfather kept the sun hidden away in a box, until Raven cleverly deceived him and stole it and put it into the sky. They could have been used in shamanic practices because shamans believed they received spirit power through the tongues of their animal helpers. By portraying all of this in art form, it allowed for the transference to occur more easily.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 47.

¹³⁶ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 151-152.



Figure 13. Rattle (Raven Rattle), Catalog No: 16.1/1979. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

The Tsimshian also made many masks, some of which were used during ceremonies called *naxnox*.¹³⁷ *Naxnox*, which means “power beyond the human,” was a special bond a chief shared with a being that transferred powers to him. During these events, performers wore masks and regalia and then dramatized stories of the beings the regalia represented. These masks represented many things, including different groups of people like males, females, children, elders, outsiders and rival groups, as well as celestial beings, animals, human faults including pride, lying, arrogance, laziness, stupidity, and sadness, and could even ridicule specific people.¹³⁸

Tsimshian sculpture, in general, varies slightly from other Northern groups. Peter L. Macnair describes Tsimshian sculpture as being:

refined and sensitive, expressing a smoothly transitional flow between facial features. Eyebrows are arched and relatively thin. The forehead slopes back. The orbit is open and softly rounded, the eyelid is incised but

¹³⁷ Ibid., 151.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

lacks a defining line around the edges. As Holm [...] describes it, 'the upper cheek, forehead and cheek planes intersect to form a truncated, rounded pyramid. The mouth is fairly wide and the lips thin.' In many examples the chin is short from top to bottom, particularly on totem poles [...] and some of the massive masks [...]. On flatter and smaller carvings [...], sculptural form creates a serene countenance, indicating the artist is intimately aware of human anatomy. The stylized realism which results gives an impression of skin pulled tightly over muscle and bone.¹³⁹

Like the other cultures in the north, the Tlingit also carved different types of sculptures, many made for use in potlatches. They carved conical, wooden (or sometimes woven) hats, which were extremely important to the Tlingit and the most widely revered type of headwear. The most valuable hats were those that had many basketry rings at the top, and the carvings on these hats indicated the family crest of the person who wore it. They were worn during potlatches and the story was told to those attending (Figure 14).¹⁴⁰ Shamanic items, like charms, were also very important to the Tlingit and they had the most out of any group in the Northwest Coast. The shaman, or medicine man, carried the charm around, either on a necklace or attached to their clothing. Usually small so the shaman could hold it while doing his work, and made of tooth, bone, ivory or wood, these charms had multiple figures carved on them. Usually, a main figure was carved interacting with other figures, which represented the owner's visions. These charms supported the shaman during his practices to heal the sick. He called his spirit helpers who entered their artistic representations on the charm, giving the charm power to do the shaman's bidding. Shamans also participated in séances where they wore special masks each depicting a specific being, usually river

¹³⁹ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 48.

¹⁴⁰ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 134-135.

otters, birds, sea animals, like the octopus, other mammals, spirit beings, and even humans. By putting these masks on and exchanging one for another, the shaman confirmed that he had the ability to travel both on land, in the sea, in the air, and could help any type of person, either dead or alive, and of any age and sex. He also used other items during these rituals like drums and rattles, which helped the shaman even more with his endeavor.¹⁴¹



Figure 14. Hat, Chief's, Crow, Catalog No: 19/1000. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

The Central region also practiced distinguishable two dimensional and sculptural art. During pre-contact times, the tribes more to the south in the Central region, like the Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw (as well as the Coast Salish in the Southern region), had very distinct two-dimensional art. The tribes in the northern areas of the Central region, including the Oweekeno,

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 142-145.

Nuxalk, Heiltsuk and Haisla, had a two-dimensional art style more northern-like before the 1860s. Around the 1860s, northern artists began to create a specific style, which spread to the southern tribes in the Central region. Many of these changes occurred in the Heiltsuk villages, where artists painted with thin formlines, which became a distinguishable characteristic of Central region art. They also started including parallel hatching into their designs in secondary and tertiary features. Around the same time, the Nuuchah-nulth, or Westcoast people, began experimenting with a new design style, which had a very fluid and non-symmetrical form. Many of these designs were found on dance screens. This style became one of the most well-known two-dimensional styles and is very distinctive. By 1880, all of these new design ideas were well established.¹⁴²

Central region two-dimensional art may be very distinguishable, but artists from these cultures are mostly known for their sculptural works. Many of the tribes in this region put on dance performances as well as potlatches and other ceremonies, especially in the winter months, and because of this they produced many pieces to wear and to use during the performances. The Heiltsuk had to inherit the ability to perform in masked dancing societies, like the *Tseka*, an intense and violent dance, and the *Dluwulaxa*, a more subdued type of dance.¹⁴³ In all of these performances, masks were a very important factor. The dances told of origin stories, shamanic experiences, and supernatural encounters. A typical anthropomorphic mask from the Heiltsuk has:

¹⁴² Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 36-37.

¹⁴³ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 97-101.

eyebrows [that] are sharply angled, expanding towards the temple. The orbit is well defined and within it lies a large, rather flattened and leaf-shaped orb. Examples from this sub-school show a painted, not carved, eyelid line placed high in the orbit. Finally, the mouth projects noticeably forward and the upper lip arches prominently above an essentially horizontal lower lip.¹⁴⁴

The Nuxalk also had their own dancing societies similar to the Heiltsuk, called the *Sisaok* and the *Kusiut*, in which they also wore masks.¹⁴⁵ Many of the masks from the Nuxalk were based off of cosmological animal and human ancestral beings from the earth, two levels of sky, an underground land, and a land under the sea.¹⁴⁶ The sun had a significant importance to the Nuxalk and was presented on masks as well as other art works as a human face enclosed in a ring. During performances, the masks could be attached to a mechanism that would make the sun mask appear as if it were rising and setting throughout the event.¹⁴⁷ Conventionally, a Nuxalk sculpture has a

forehead [that] sweeps back sharply from heavy, projecting eyebrows which are moderately angled. A pronounced, leaf-shaped orb is evident with carved eyelid line defining rather small eyes on the upper half of this. Protruding lips are typical with upper and lower distinctly separate. Usually the chin recedes, almost to the point of being non-existent. Surface painting consists of solid u-forms both following and crossing carved planes. The triangular areas between the u-forms are often painted white and may distract the unwary viewer into considering them positive elements rather than negative space [...].¹⁴⁸

The potlatch, although important before the contact with outsiders, became a very crucial part of life for the Kwakwaka'wakw after contact due to

¹⁴⁴ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 49.

¹⁴⁵ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 106.

¹⁴⁶ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 49.

¹⁴⁷ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 104-106.

¹⁴⁸ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 49-50.

trading which caused an increase in wealth in the area. As discussed above, new items and materials introduced by trading allowed for certain individuals and families to become wealthier, and this allowed for these families and chiefs to host more elaborate special events and potlatches to show their prestige within their communities. Feast dishes were carved to place food in during the celebrations, sculptures were carved depicting the chief's wealth and placed next to the entrance to the feasts, and masks were carved to wear during dances. Transformation masks were made for and worn in Kwakwaka'wakw dances, especially the *Tseka*, *Tlasala*, or *Hamat'sa* dances. These masks represented two to three different creatures, or multiple stages of development for one creature, and when worn, the wearer pulled strings to open up one part of the mask to reveal the second and then the third beings at relevant moments during the ceremony. This portrayed a metamorphosis; the ability to change into another being at will.¹⁴⁹ Kwakwaka'wakw sculptures have "heavy eyebrows, an angular orbit and well-defined orb represented as a truncated cone [...]. The eye dominates the orb; pupil and eyelid line are accented by engraved cuts. Prominent nostrils, a stylized mouth with continuous lips and a minimal chin, complete the major sculptural features."¹⁵⁰ What sets these apart from sculptures from other areas is the paint; the whole sculpture was painted, but each area was defined by a different color, and the eye, which was painted with an eccentric

¹⁴⁹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 108-117.

¹⁵⁰ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 51.

pupil, was a distinguishable characteristic found only on Kwakwaka'wakw sculpture.¹⁵¹

Nuu-chah-nulth sculpture was also distinct; the anthropomorphic beings, carved on masks, totem poles and other sculptural works, were triangular in shape, with no eye socket carved out, a protruding nose, and a mouth set back into the face with little to no chin or jaw. Some of these masks were danced in the Wolf dance, which was a performance about the abduction of initiates by wolves.¹⁵²

Two-dimensional and sculptural art from the Southern region also stood out and had quite distinguishable characteristics. Two-dimensional design, although not used as much as in cultures from more northern areas, was still an important part of their artistic practices. It stayed fairly consistent from the time of contact through to the 1890s. Most designs were used on ritualistic items like rattles made from the horns of mountain sheep, as well as more functional objects like fish and whaling clubs, spindle whorls, and combs. The Coast Salish used concentric circles in their designs which they often used as joints and it is thought that these concentric circles preceded the ovoid in the north. They also used devices such as crescents, v-forms, and u-forms.¹⁵³

Weaving was an important woman's art among the Coast Salish. Early on, blankets were made with mountain goat wool, and sometimes even with wool from dogs bred specifically for that purpose, although this species of canid

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 51-52.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 39-42

eventually went extinct. Those woven initially were very simple, usually white with basic parallel lines, but as time went on color was added to these blankets, and more geometric patterns with horizontal, vertical and even zig-zag patterns and lines within rectangular bands became the norm. These weavings resemble the Tlingit Raven's Tail blankets. Although they did not portray beings or creatures and do not tell a story, they did, as Aldona Jonaitis asserts, "communicate in abstract form certain highly valued cultural concepts. This is perhaps one explanation for the esteem in which fine weavers were held, and the importance to a girl's education of learning how to weave well."¹⁵⁴

Women also wove baskets, especially in the Columbia River area. They used plain twining and wrapped twining techniques, and created geometric and simple designs, sometimes with depictions of canine or four-legged creatures as well as simple portrayals of humans.¹⁵⁵

Three-dimensional art and sculpture was very different in the Southern region. Many items were carved for utilitarian reasons, such as bowls, ladles and spoons. Many were made from horn of the bighorn sheep, which they boiled until they were pliable enough to shape. Once cooled, they were able to carve designs on them, usually zig-zags around the rim and simple carved animal designs on the handles. Many were used in rituals and celebrations.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 76-83.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 61-65.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

Beings were also carved onto certain items to help the person using it. Carvers would carve human figures on adzes and tools, for example, so that when the carver became tired, the carved spirit would help to keep him going.¹⁵⁷

Coast Salish sculpture also included grave markers, houseposts, and masks. The style can be identified very easily, as it is different from the styles in the Central and Northern regions. Anthropomorphic depictions were used fairly often, and most had a flat face, eyebrows with very subtle arches, and small eyes with eyelid lines cut around them. *Sxwayxwey* masks were used during specific life changing rituals, including naming ceremonies, marriages, deaths, and births. Most of these masks conformed to the descriptions of carvings above, with the addition of cylindrical bulging eyes, which was characteristic of these masks.¹⁵⁸

In general, Coast Salish and other Southern regional art was substantially different from art made in the other regions. The Coast Salish believed in simplicity; they believed the more items that were created using their spirits' images, the more the spirits' powers would be used and wasted. They created fewer items in order to keep this power drain in check. This is different from the northern belief that an excess of art and material goods was better to portray their wealth.¹⁵⁹

For the most part, all Northwest Coast art from the "traditional" period can be identified as coming from the Northwest in contrast to material items created by Indigenous groups in other cultural areas, even if they did have some variation

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹⁵⁸ Hoover, Macnair, and Neary, *The Legacy*, 52-54.

¹⁵⁹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 87-88.

in appearance and design between Northwest Coast cultures. Those from outside the culture area today who do not know much about the Northwest Coast cultures and their art, would probably be able to identify works as coming from the Northwest, even if they cannot point out the precise region or tribal nation it came from. On the other hand, to the more learned eye, the art can be very distinct and finite, and with practice, one can understand the subtle differences between cultural styles.

This traditional art is extremely important because these pieces were made during a time when outsiders came to this area, recorded processes and descriptions about the pieces and the artists, and traded with them, which gave the artists new materials to work with. This was a crucial point in time in the Northwest Coast region. In this chapter, we discussed art during the time after contact, but there is another element missing, which is important to understanding the relationship between museums, Natives and artists. Collectors came to the Northwest Coast and collected items that ultimately ended up in museums and were protected from the natural elements, time, and decay, and, unknowingly, were there to help future generations of artists learn the ways of their ancestors. This will be the focus of the next chapter, because without these resourceful people, some of the art styles from the “traditional” period, and even from times before that, might be extinct today.

Chapter VII: The Era of Collecting

After trading companies started settling in the Northwest Coast, other non-Natives began moving there as well. Some were tolerant of the Natives’ culture,

like the traders who were settled there for some time and who knew them through trading, but the new Europeans who came did not understand them, and they brought with them European ideals about the superiority of whites to others, particularly non-whites. Some settlers were encouraged to settle in new smaller communities. The white settlers became unnerved by the Natives, and asked the governments to remove them from the settlements and cities, like Victoria, British Columbia. These newcomers did not realize that the disturbances by the Natives were created by the expansion of settlers to this area.¹⁶⁰

At the same time, a different group was trying to destroy the Natives' cultures: the missionaries. They claimed they wanted to educate and westernize the Natives so they would abandon their old ways and traditions, which were seen as savage by the missionaries and Europeans. They were mostly interested in eliminating practices such as shamanic ritual practices, ceremonial feasts (like the potlatch), and communal ownership of resources. The potlatch was seen as an overtly wasteful event, where people drank too much and gave away too many items and too much food.¹⁶¹ Because of this, the Canadian government banned any potlatch activity in an 1884 amendment to the 1880 Indian Act, which stated:

Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the "Potlatch" or the Indian dance known as "Tamanowas" [...] is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than six nor less than two months in any gaol or other place of confinement; and any Indian or other person who encourages, either directly or indirectly, an Indian or Indians to get such a festival or dance, or to celebrate the same, or who shall assist in

¹⁶⁰ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 46-48.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

the celebration of same is guilty of a like offense, and shall be liable to the same punishment.¹⁶²

This new law forced Native Americans to discontinue these traditional ceremonies, even though they were long-standing practices, which had become more and more extravagant due to the ever-increasing trade and interactions with the new white settlers. By outlawing these activities, European settlers were trying to dramatically change Native culture. Since Native Americans could no longer publically participate in these events, the art created for them in some cultures decreased since much of the artworks were made for the potlatches and other ceremonies. The Haida, for example, who became wealthy during the early trading period, complied and stopped potlatching, with some even converting to Christianity. Because of this, their art nearly disappeared during this time period. Although it was illegal, some societies continued to host potlatches in secret, like the Kwakwaka'wakw, who created even more and impressive works than those created before the ban. They did try to make the ceremonies lower-key affairs than ones thrown in previous times, in order to prevent detection, but many times they also disguised them as other, more Christian-like celebrations, like Christmas.¹⁶³

Around this same time, a few curious visitors who had heard about Northwest Coast Native Americans and their cultures began arriving to the area in hopes of learning more about them. Some were scholars and anthropologists,

¹⁶² An Act Further to Amend "The Indian Act, 1880," *Statutes of Canada* 1884 (47 Vict.), chap. 27, sec. 3.

¹⁶³ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 175-176.

like Franz Boas, who wanted to talk with Natives and buy and collect as many items as they could before the Natives, and their cultural material, disappeared. This idea was widespread at this time, because many people thought that Native Americans were going to become extinct. Many of these anthropologists and scholars worked for museums both in North America as well as abroad in Europe and all competed with one another to collect the most impressive works from Northwest Coast cultures. The key players included the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the Field Museum in Chicago, and the Smithsonian. Some other collectors lived on the Northwest Coast and because of their interest in and proximity to the Natives, were able to learn much and buy items from them. Some of these collectors came to know museum researchers, and became go-to men for the museums when they desired certain items or information. Many would sell ethnographic objects/artifacts to the museums for money, or ask the museums for funding in order to obtain what they requested. Much of this collecting took place between 1880 and 1920.

One of the earliest collectors was Dr. Israel Powell, a medical doctor living in Victoria who became the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in British Columbia in 1872. Although he did not know much about Native Americans or their cultures, he was appointed to this position by the government for political reasons, even though the purpose of his post was to speak with and advocate for the Natives. During this time, Powell started to amass a collection of Northwest Coast works, some of which he ended up selling to the Smithsonian Institution, as well as to what was then the National Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of

History) in Ottawa. In 1880, Powell met Heber Bishop, a trustee from the American Museum of Natural History. Bishop was eager to start a Northwest Coast collection for the Museum, which he would fund. After speaking with Powell, Bishop decided that Powell would be the perfect man to acquire the items for his new collection. The position lasted for five years, and by the time it ended, Powell had sent 791 items to the museum.¹⁶⁴ One of the most notable items was a twenty-one meter long Haida canoe. To get this to the museum, a group of Haida were hired to row it from the Skeena River to Victoria, then it was placed on a steamer headed to San Francisco. Once there, it was placed on another steamer, which sailed to Panama, and was placed on two flatcars to cross the isthmus. Once it was on the other side it was placed on a final steamer headed to New York. By the time it got to New York, the museum had to hire a horse-drawn truck to make the final leg of the journey to the museum from the docks.¹⁶⁵

Lieutenant George Thornton Emmons was another person who lived along the Northwest Coast and collected items for sale to museums, including the Burke Museum, the Field Museum, and the museum that he sold his biggest collection to, the American Museum of Natural History. In 1882, Emmons was stationed in Sitka, Alaska as a naval lieutenant and soon became attracted to the Tlingit Indians and began learning about them and their culture. Since he was respectful towards them, the Indians allowed him to attend ceremonies, as well

¹⁶⁴ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 71-73.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

as speak to members in the community and purchase and collect items from them. He became an expert in Tlingit culture, and even learned to speak to them in their own language. After he purchased an item, he spoke to the Natives and wrote down everything he learned from them. Emmons amassed a huge collection in this way, and since he was also acquainted with Heber Bishop, he was able to sell over four thousand Tlingit pieces, along with his extensive notes on each piece, to the American Museum of Natural History between 1888 and 1893 for around \$37,000.¹⁶⁶

Another museum correspondent in the second half of the nineteenth century was James Swan, who worked with and sold pieces to the Smithsonian Institution. In 1857, Swan had met Joseph Henry, Secretary of the Institution, and Spencer Baird, Assistant Secretary in Charge of Publications and Collections, while in Washington D.C. and working as the secretary to Isaac Stevens, the territorial delegate. In 1860, after moving back to the Northwest Coast after his short stay in the United States' capital, Swan collected natural history material, including preserved shellfish and fish, and sent them to the Smithsonian.¹⁶⁷ The museum was thrilled with the specimens, and they soon decided to expand the scope of their museum collections. In 1863, the Institution sent out a circular stating its desire to accumulate ethnological material from the tribes on the North American continent, including tools, artworks and American skulls.¹⁶⁸ Swan, having read this circular, thought he was in the perfect position to collect these

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 106-112.

¹⁶⁷ Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 11.

desirous items for the Smithsonian based on his good rapport with the Natives. Swan began buying pieces from the Natives, which he sent to Washington D.C., however he soon became aggravated at the museum for their disorderly practices, including incorrect labeling and inability to expand their collecting opportunities. He was also frustrated at the fact that the museum would not reimburse him for the items he had collected: “the time has gone by for me to work for fame or honor. [...] I must work for pay.”¹⁶⁹ Baird was able to repay Swan for small purchases he made, but was unable to compensate him for larger purchases or to hire him as a permanent, salaried collector for the museum. Although Swan collected and sold a few pieces to the Imperial Museum of Natural History in Vienna in 1874 to demonstrate his ability to not solely rely upon the Smithsonian for work, Swan quickly returned to the service of the Smithsonian after Baird mentioned the possibility of receiving funding from Congress for a collection for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.¹⁷⁰ Although it took nearly nine months to arrange, Swan was named the Special Agent to the Indian Bureau in March 1875, and became a salaried collector for the Smithsonian.¹⁷¹ Having already travelled back to the Northwest Coast, Swan had prepared for this moment and began collecting with zeal. By the time the Centennial Exhibition began in May 1876, Swan had procured about five hundred objects.¹⁷² Collecting was not as easy as he had anticipated since the U.S.

¹⁶⁹ James Swan to Spencer Baird, February, 22, 1873, RU 53, v. 47.

¹⁷⁰ Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 19.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 27-28.

government did not pay him in advance, and the trips around the Northwest Coast he had planned did not work out. He eventually sent the items to Philadelphia, but he did not have enough money to attend himself, although he wished he could be there to install his collection properly. In the end, his collection was set up in a very poor manner, and the Centennial Exhibition was not a great success.¹⁷³

Around this time, Baird and Swan learned that word of the Northwest Coast had reached the ears of foreigners, and many started arriving to the coast in order to collect the biggest and best items for their own collections, especially Drs. Aurel and Arthur Krause, German brothers who worked on behalf of the Berlin Ethnologisches Museum. Baird was irate, writing to Swan and John J. McLean, a member of the U.S. Signals Service and another interested collector whom Baird had recently met, in 1882: "I wish there was some law [that prohibited foreigners from] coming in and carrying off all our treasures. [I have no objection to their taking sketches and photographs, but] the specimens themselves should come to American establishments."¹⁷⁴ Baird enlisted Swan to help with collecting pieces for a few more exhibitions in the coming years, including the 1883 International Fisheries Exposition in London and the Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans in 1884. After Baird's death in 1887, the new staff in Washington overlooked Swan. His work with the Smithsonian was effectively completed by this time, but he collected a few pieces for the Chicago

¹⁷³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁷⁴ Baird to Swan, May 5, 1882, Baird to McLean, May 5, 1882, RU 33, v. 122.

World's Fair in 1892-93 for both the Washington State exhibit as well as for Franz Boas. Swan died in May 1900 at the age of eighty-two, still in debt from the collecting he did for the Smithsonian in his younger years.¹⁷⁵

Franz Boas is probably the most well-known Northwest Coast collector and anthropologist of his time. He was born in Prussia in 1858 and grew up in Germany, but being from a liberal, Jewish family, he had a difficult childhood and college life. He eventually graduated with a Ph.D. in Physics and a minor in geography from the University of Kiel in 1881.¹⁷⁶ After he graduated, he travelled to Baffin Island in the Arctic Ocean to study the Eskimo (now known as the Inuit), a journey which he thoroughly enjoyed. He learned that this so-called inferior group was not inferior or simple, but had a complex egalitarian culture. This made Boas think about his home in Germany and the inequality he faced there, and he wished to move to a more ethnically open-minded country. Before he could do so, he obtained a temporary assistantship position at the Royal Ethnographic Museum of Berlin after he returned from the Arctic. This is where he first learned about the Northwest Coast culture area and became absorbed with their Indigenous cultures.¹⁷⁷

In 1886, he travelled to the Northwest Coast for the first time. He visited the Kwakwaka'wakw, and although they were wary of him at first, Boas demonstrated that he could be trusted and truly did want to learn about their

¹⁷⁵ Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 37-47.

¹⁷⁶ "Franz Boas," *Department of Anthropology*, Columbia University, <http://anthropology.columbia.edu/departments-history/franz-boas>.

¹⁷⁷ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 122-124.

culture. He even hosted his own potlatch to portray his sincere intentions and his understanding of their customs.¹⁷⁸

A few years later, and after several more trips to the Northwest Coast funded by the Northwest Tribes Committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science,¹⁷⁹ Frederick Ward Putnum, Curator of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, asked Boas to be his Assistant for the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. After the close of the fair, Boas hoped to be hired by the Field Museum, but another person was chosen instead.¹⁸⁰ Putnum, having also not been offered a position in Chicago, was then hired by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York as the part-time Curator of the Department of Archaeology and Ethnology.¹⁸¹ Putnum agreed to the offer, provided that the museum allow him to maintain his position as Director of Harvard's Peabody Museum. President of the AMNH, Morris Ketchum Jesup, agreed to his terms and allowed Putnum to live in Cambridge, Massachusetts and travel to AMNH for one week each month to perform the duties of his new position.¹⁸² Putnum, in turn, offered Boas a temporary position at AMNH creating life group exhibits of Northwest Coast Native Americans using manikins,¹⁸³ and eventually offered him the position of Assistant Curator in the Department of Archaeology and Ethnology at AMNH.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 124-126.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 129.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 133.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 121.

¹⁸² Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 141.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 135.

Boas also accepted a part-time position as a lecturer at Columbia University at this same time.¹⁸⁴

With Boas in his new position, he and Putnum began trying to convince Jesup to fund a new, quite expensive, project: an extensive collecting trip to the Northwest Coast. Jesup agreed, and the Jesup North Pacific Expedition was born.¹⁸⁵

The expedition lasted from 1897-1901. Its agents brought back thousands of items and written information about the cultures and artifacts. A large portion of this collection was made up of Kwakwaka'wakw items. This collection would not have been possible without the help of cultural informants, particularly those who were Natives themselves.¹⁸⁶

In general, Native informants were beneficial throughout the whole era of collecting. Particularly, though, the field agents we know about today are those who helped collect material and information during large expeditions like the Jesup North Pacific Expedition. George Hunt is one of these well-known informants. A son of an English Hudson's Bay Company worker and a Tlingit woman, Hunt grew up exposed to both cultures. He married twice, both to Kwakwaka'wakw women, and knew how to speak Tlingit, Kwak'wala and English. He was an interpreter for Israel Powell when he met Franz Boas, who thought Hunt would be the perfect informant. Hunt worked for Boas, both during the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition where he managed the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 153-154.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 154.

¹⁸⁶ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 207-208.

Kwakwaka'wakw camp, as well as during the Jesup North Pacific Expedition. Because of his connection to the Natives, Hunt was able to gather more material and information than other collectors. At times, he also knowingly collected material unethically, by digging up graves, disassembling buildings, and stealing items. This was done in the name of salvage ethnography, and as a way to protect them from future degradation by keeping them safe inside the museum.¹⁸⁷

Many times, informants or collectors would buy pre-existing artifacts from Natives for museum collections. Although this idea was always prevalent, another collecting idea around this time also became prominent: commissioned work. Collectors would commission artists from Native communities to make certain pieces of art that, perhaps, they could not find elsewhere or could not persuade an owner to sell. In this way, a new type of relationship was born. One of the most well-known commissioned artists and informants was Charles Edenshaw, a highly regarded Haida artist. Boas had met Edenshaw in 1897 and learned many things about Haida culture from him. Another collector for Boas, John Swanton, a Ph.D. graduate from Harvard, arrived in Haida Gwaii in 1900 and met Edenshaw as well. Swanton saw Edenshaw's potential and commissioned him to carve model canoes, a model house and model totem poles. In this way, Edenshaw and other artists like him, including Charlie James, a Kwakwaka'wakw dance mask and totem pole carver, and Captain Richard

¹⁸⁷ Margaret M. Bruchac, "My Sisters Will Not Speak: Boas, Hunt and the Ethnographic Silencing of First Nations Women," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 57, no. 2 (2014): 153-158.

Carpenter, a Heiltsuk boat builder,¹⁸⁸ were able to earn money and make a living from this work.¹⁸⁹

Another similar endeavor that Native artists took part in was the tourist and curio trade. This occurrence was related directly to the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1882, which connected the east and west coasts of the United States. Once on the west coast, tourists could board steamships at the cities of San Francisco, Portland or Seattle in the United States or Victoria in Canada to travel north. The tourists were very interested in seeing totem poles and shopping for curios to take home with them to remember their exotic trips. John Muir, a naturalist, noticed in Wrangell, Alaska in 1890 that:

There was a grand rush on shore to buy curiosities and see totem poles. The shops were jammed and mobbed, high prices being paid for shabby stuff manufactured expressly for the tourist trade. Silver bracelets hammered out of dollars and half dollars by Indian smiths are the most popular articles, then baskets, yellow cedar toy canoes, paddles, etc.¹⁹⁰

This demand for souvenirs by the tourists caused the artists to begin creating miniatures and models of Native items including totem poles and canoes, very similar to the ones that Charles Edenshaw would eventually be commissioned to carve. They also began making and selling functional art to tourists that were used in their communities, like baskets and masks, to increase income.¹⁹¹

One specific type of art that began to fill the market was Haida argillite carving. Argillite is a black carbonaceous shale found on Haida Gwaii, which

¹⁸⁸ Ira Jacknis, "Towards An Art History of Northwest Coast First Nations," *BC Studies*, no. 135 (Autumn 2002): 93-94.

¹⁸⁹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 213-215.

¹⁹⁰ John Muir, *Travels in Alaska* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 293.

¹⁹¹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 191-193.

Haida artists carved into many different items. The Haida began creating souvenir art in the 1820s when they noticed merchants and whalers wanted to bring souvenirs back home with them. They began carving argillite, the earliest art pieces being pipes, but eventually carved all sorts of items including boxes, candlestick holders, bowls, and inkwells.¹⁹²

Collecting, by commissioning as well as buying existing items, on the Northwest Coast continued until about 1920. In regards to the relationship between Northwest Coast art and museums, collecting was probably one of the most important events to occur. Without the hard work of the museum workers, collectors, informants and artists, we would not have the collections and cultural information that we have today in museums around the world. This was also the start of the creation of relationships between Natives and non-natives, especially between Natives and museums. Although other non-Native groups, like the missionaries and the government, wanted to disrupt Indigenous cultures, museums knew how important they were, even though they thought they would become extinct.

Chapter VIII: Northwest Coast Art in the Twentieth Century

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Natives in the Northwest Coast culture area confronted several challenges. More settlers came to the region intent on building lives for themselves, and to accomplish that, they needed land, and in order to obtain this land, they believed land needed to be taken away from the Natives. A report ratified in 1924 by the provincial and

¹⁹² Ibid., 193-195.

dominion governments in Canada, called the McKenna-McBride Agreement, took lands away from the Natives. The Natives, who never consented to the agreement, nor signed any documents, argued that the land was still theirs. The federal government looked into these allegations and ruled that the Natives had no rights to that land.¹⁹³

Some Native groups did gain political rights at this time, however. In 1915 a group called the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB), who were committed to advocating Native rights, gained the Indians US citizenship and the right to vote. Although this occurred, the process was difficult and very few were granted citizenship, but it was still a step in the right direction.¹⁹⁴

As to art practices, although the Canadian government placed a ban on potlatching as previously discussed, not all groups complied, especially the Kwakwaka'wakw, who in 1921 threw a grand potlatch. An informant told the local Indian agent who broke up the festivities. The attendants were told they could either be arrested or give up their potlatch goods. The goods taken from this incident, known as the "Potlatch Collection," were dispersed to museums in New York City, Toronto, and Ottawa.¹⁹⁵ The Kwakwaka'wakw still would not give up what they believed to be their birthright, and continued to potlatch, but in more secretive ways. Because of this resiliency, the flourishing of art created during this time portrayed a deep pride in their culture, different and more flamboyant than the art made during the nineteenth century. Some of the artists from this

¹⁹³ Ibid., 222-223.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 223.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 224.

time became some of the most well-known Northwest Coast artists that are still admired today, including Mungo Martin, Willie Seaweed, and Charlie James.¹⁹⁶

Charlie James was born around 1875, but not much is known about his early life. He carved many pieces in Kwakwaka'wakw style, both for traditional use as well as for sale in the commercial market. He had a very distinct style in which he included more colors and carved in a more free-style way. His expertise enabled him to teach others who would also become important artistic figures on the Northwest Coast including Mungo Martin, Ellen Neel and Henry Hunt.¹⁹⁷

Mungo Martin, Kwakwaka'wakw, was born at Tsaxis (also known as Fort Rupert) on Vancouver Island at some point around 1879. After his father died when he was young, his mother married Charlie James who became Martin's carving teacher. Martin matured and refined his style under the tutelage of James, and was eventually asked by different museums to help restore totem poles in their collections, which will be discussed below. Martin, in turn, became a teacher himself to his son and other relatives interested in his craft.¹⁹⁸

Willie Seaweed, also a Kwakwaka'wakw carver, was born in Tigwaxsti around 1873. His father was the Hílamas, head chief of the na'mim Gixsam, but he died shortly before Seaweed was born. The name Hílamas was transferred to Seaweed promptly after his father's death, as a way to make sure his privileges

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 224.

¹⁹⁷ David Neel, "Charlie James," David Neel Studio, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.davidneel.com/charlie-james-a-13.html>.

¹⁹⁸ Frederica de Laguna, "Mungo Martin 1879-1962," *American Anthropologist*, 65, no. 4 (Aug., 1963): 894-895.

stayed intact.¹⁹⁹ Seaweed received many privileges throughout his life; he received different Hamatsa dances, for example, which allowed him to use specific masks, like the Raising-Top Hamatsa mask and the Both-Sides-Face mask, during those dances. After Seaweed's son, Joe, was born, he made Hamatsa masks, with the help of Mungo Martin, for Joe's initiation into the Hamatsa.²⁰⁰ Although many of Seaweed's works were not signed by him, about 120 works are ascribed to him, and of those, about two-thirds are masks.²⁰¹ Seaweed also made other ceremonial objects, including coppers, drums, rattles, house front paintings, whistles, and totem poles, and he also made miniature totem poles as well as other tourist art. His son, Joe, apprenticed under him, and he also worked with other artists, including Mungo Martin and Charlie George, Sr. Seaweed was well respected in his community as the chief and for his expert knowledge on their traditions.²⁰²

After a few decades of land and human rights conflicts, both the United States and Canadian governments began to see the importance of Native cultures. Non-Natives were enthralled with totem poles, and since tourists loved visiting the spectacular works, both the United States and Canadian governments understood the necessity to try to restore them. The earliest restoration work completed was in the late 1920s, when a group of non-Natives thought that the Gitksan poles erected along the Skeena River should be

¹⁹⁹ Bill Holm, *Smoky-Top: The Art and Times of Willie Seaweed* (Washington: The University of Washington Press, 1983), 22-24.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 29-33.

preserved. The Canadian National Railway worked with the Canadian government in order to restore the poles. A committee was created that worked together with the Tsimshian chiefs in order to take the poles down to repair them, and then re-erect them beside the train tracks for tourists to view from their train windows. Although the project began well, by 1927, animosity for the project by the Natives grew. This was because of the non-Native's sudden interest in their cultures, when not too long before, the Natives were told not to create them. By 1931, the project came to a stop.²⁰³ Although this seemed to be a step in the wrong direction, more positive work would soon occur. It would take some time for both the Natives and non-Natives to feel they could trust one another, but the fact that a project to this extent occurred, especially during the beginning of the twentieth century, and cooperation occurred at least in the beginning, meant that relations between the groups were heading in the right direction.

Before the 1930s, westerners still thought of Native American art as 'craft' and not necessarily 'art.' They believed the Natives were still part of an uncivilized group of people, so their art was also considered uncivilized. It was not until the 1930s that this idea began to change. In 1934, the United States government, under the Franklin Roosevelt administration, passed the Wheeler-Howard Indian Rights Bill, or "Indian New Deal," which gave Native Americans in the U.S. more rights than they previously held. They received religious freedom, became self-governing, and artistic practices were highly accepted.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 235.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 235-236.

A major milestone had occurred, and it brought Indians into a new light. Free to pursue their interests in their cultures, certain programs were initiated by the Indian New Deal, including the Indian Civilian Conservation Corps (Indian CCC), which gave jobs to Natives. The Indian Arts and Craft Board (IACB) was also formed to encourage American Indians to make and sell their art as a way to help them become self-sufficient.²⁰⁵ In 1938, a program of great significance was created in Alaska under the instruction of the U.S. Forest Service. This program, once again, allowed for the restoration of totem poles and was a highly publicized project that urged society to see the poles as a significant aspect of America's cultural history. Program and government leaders sought permission from Native groups to remove totem poles left abandoned in their old villages in order to restore, or replicate them if they were too badly decayed, and move them into specific parks dedicated to the Natives for all to enjoy. Officials ensured the Indians that the poles would remain in the Indian's control and ownership. Each restoration group had a senior carver who led the team in their endeavors to restore old and decayed poles, carve copies of poles beyond repair, and create completely new ones with new designs. The Indian CCC ended up employing around 250 Natives and the poles were placed in parks, most of which were not far from the newer Tlingit and Haida villages.²⁰⁶ Totem pole restoration continued to be an important task and many projects were created in order to continue the restoration, which still continues to this day.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 239.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 236-238.

Art programs were also beginning in Canada around this time as well. Residential schools for Native children had been put in place after the Canadian Indian Act of 1876 was passed, and children were sent to them in order to separate them from the influence of their families and their cultures, and to be integrated into the westernized Canadian culture. Many of these schools, which were usually run by the church and government, were run insufficiently, had poor living conditions, and the children were very isolated and were not allowed to speak their Native languages. In 1924, however, George Raley, principal of the Coqualeetza Industrial Institute in British Columbia, decided to take the school in a new direction by having a new building built, as well as encouraging the creation of Native arts, which was taken up earnestly by the students.²⁰⁷

Alice Ravenhill, originally a home economics, child care, and public health educator in England, moved to Vancouver Island in 1910, and soon became interested in the local Indigenous arts. She spent much of her time devoted to learning about this subject and soon became an expert. In 1940, she established the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts which promoted the renewal of Native arts in the region. Ravenhill and the Society encouraged Native students in Residential schools to take up these tradition arts and in this way, like Raley, helped to reform the Residential schools and education system.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ "Coqualeetza Industrial Institute," *The Children Remembered*, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-locations/coqualeetza/>.

²⁰⁸ LiLynn Wan, "A Nation of Artists: Alice Ravenhill and the British Columbia Society for the Furtherance of Indian Arts and Crafts," *BC Studies*, no. 178 (Summer 2013): 52.

In the 1950s, totem poles that had been placed at the University of British Columbia began to decay, so the Museum of Anthropology at the university sought the help of Mungo Martin, the renowned Northwest Coast carver, to help restore them. Afterward, Martin was asked by the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria to work on restoring the poles erected in their Thunderbird Park as well as two Northwest Coast houses. Martin began his restoration work, allowing visitors to watch him and ask questions. During this time, he also sought the help of other carvers because the projects were too extensive for just one man. He asked his son, David, along with Henry Hunt, his adopted daughter's husband, and Tony Hunt, Henry's son. Martin even built a house in the Kwakwaka'wakw style in 1953. On December 14-16, 1953, Martin hosted a potlatch in order to authenticate it. This was a major event because in 1951, the Canadian potlatch ban had been lifted from the Indian Act, and this marked the first legal potlatch since the ban was put into place in 1884.²⁰⁹

The next step in making society comprehend Northwest Coast artwork as 'art' was to help them to understand it. One of the best ways this was done was through exhibitions. The first exhibition that included American Indian art took place in 1931 and was organized by the Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, Inc. They took "'masterpieces' that defined the regional styles and exemplified a distinctly Native aesthetic,"²¹⁰ from museum collections. These items were then placed next to contemporary pieces to show that Native American art had a past

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 241-242.

²¹⁰ Fane, "New Questions for 'Old Things,'" 63.

as well as a future, or “more accurately, that it had a future *because* it had a past.”²¹¹

In 1941, the Museum of Modern Art showed another Native American art exhibit entitled, *Indian Art of the United States*. This was very similar to the 1931 exhibit in which they placed traditional art and contemporary art together,²¹² and included some works from the Northwest Coast. *Indian Art of the United States* originated as an exhibit at the San Francisco International Exposition in 1939, but Frederic Douglas, curator of Indian Arts at the Denver Art Museum, and René D'Harnoncourt, general manager of the Indian Arts and Craft Board of the United States Department of the Interior, persuaded the Museum of Modern Art to display this exhibit once more.²¹³ This time, the exhibit went more in depth and was divided into three sections: Prehistoric Art, Living Traditions, and Indian Art for Modern Living.²¹⁴ The prehistoric items were exhibited only “as art for art’s sake,”²¹⁵ while the historic/living traditions and contemporary/modern living materials were contextualized. To contextualize the contemporary works, they displayed the most contemporary works the curators could find, the main purpose of which was to show that there was a place for Native American art at that time. One of the intentions of this exhibit was to show that Native American art was a living tradition, and the best way to do so was to have artworks signed

²¹¹ Ibid., 63.

²¹² Rushing, “Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern,” 191.

²¹³ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 237.

²¹⁴ Fane, “New Questions for ‘Old Things,’” 63.

²¹⁵ Rushing, “Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern,” 194-195.

by their creators.²¹⁶ Since Natives had begun to be recognized for their own craftsmanship, this was a huge step towards seeing their work as ‘art’ and not just ‘craft.’ D’Harnoncourt hoped the community would understand “the value of contemporary Indian art when they were shown that it harmonized with the artistic concepts of modernism.”²¹⁷ This idea was also shared by Eleanor Roosevelt who, in the catalogue’s forward for the exhibit, said:

In appraising the Indian’s past and present achievements, we realize not only that his heritage constitutes part of the artistic and spiritual wealth of this country, but also that the Indian people of today have a contribution to make towards the America of the future.²¹⁸

During the first half of the twentieth century, Natives worked to resist government and to gain rights that had been taken away from them in the past. This time period was marked by a growing appreciation of Native cultures and artworks by non-Natives. By the 1960s, recognition for them had grown so much and it became a time when Natives began to create and conceive of new ideas based on their old traditions, that it became known as the ‘Northwest Coast Renaissance.’ A resurgence of pride in their cultures came to the forefront and many Natives began to learn about their traditions and traditional artistic styles, many of which had been completely lost due to the strict laws previously in place.

As previously mentioned, Bill Holm and Cheryl Samuel, both non-Natives, became important figures during this time of revival. Both were interested in Northwest Coast art and visited museums to learn about different styles, Holm

²¹⁶ Berlo, “The Formative Years,” 13.

²¹⁷ Rushing, “Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern,” 215.

²¹⁸ Frederic H. Douglas, and René D’Harnoncourt, *Indian Art of the United States* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941), 8.

spent time with the Kwakwaka'wakw and learned from artists such as Willie Seaweed, and both published books on what they learned, which became guide-book like manuals for others who wanted to learn.²¹⁹

Bill Reid was a Native artist of extreme importance also during this time. He was born in 1920 in Victoria, British Columbia to a Haida mother, Sophie Gladstone Reid, and an American father of Scottish-German descent, William (Billy) Ronald Reid, Sr. His mother grew up on Haida Gwaii but was sent away to a boarding school for Native children when she was young, which had a profound effect on her that made her hide her Native ancestry so she could live as a white woman. As a young child, Bill, his mother, and his sister Peggy, moved back and forth between Victoria, where Sophie had set up a dress-making business, and Hyder/Stewart, British Columbia near the American/Canadian border, where his father lived, owned and operated a hotel. Eventually, Sophie, Peggy and Bill settled in Victoria in 1932 and they never saw Billy again.²²⁰

On their last trip from Hyder to Victoria, the family stopped at Skidegate on Haida Gwaii, where Reid met his grandparents, Josephine and Charles Gladstone. During this visit, Reid watched his grandfather work in his work-shed engraving bracelets and carving argillite, was also introduced to other jewelry-makers and carvers, and learned about his heritage from the village elders. This visit impacted Reid and was the beginning of his interest in Native art.²²¹

²¹⁹ Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles*, 245.

²²⁰ Tippet, *Bill Reid: The Making of an Indian*, 31-41.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 43-45.

In the Spring of 1938, Reid accepted a job working as a radio broadcaster.²²² His radio broadcasting career brought him from Victoria to Ontario to Vancouver and eventually to Toronto over the next several years. While working the night show at CBC in Toronto, he enrolled in a jewelry-making class at the Ryerson Institute of Technology in the Fall of 1949.²²³ He began to be interested in his Native ancestry once again and began to apply Haida motifs into his jewelry designs. A visit to Skidegate in 1948 strengthened the importance of his work, since he discovered his grandfather was one of the last artists working in this style and it would disappear with his death if he did not continue the tradition.²²⁴

Reid moved to Vancouver with his wife, Binkie, and their daughter, Amanda, in 1951 and opened up his own workshop to work on his jewelry-making, while still working as a radio broadcaster. For the first time in his life, he did not hide his Native ancestry. He became interested in Charles Edenshaw's artworks and studied and re-created some of them. He was soon asked to work on totem pole restoration projects for the Royal British Columbia Museum and the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, during which time he worked with Mungo Martin. Through the following years, he continued to work on similar projects and continued his jewelry-making career in earnest. Reid's legacy is of great significance, since he was an artist who worked diligently and

²²² Ibid., 48-55.

²²³ Ibid., 57-61.

²²⁴ Ibid., 66-70.

passionately to not only keep the artistic forms going, but also progressed them as a result of his non-traditional artistic background.²²⁵

Northwest Coast art schools were established around this time as well. As people began to re-learn the artistic traditions, the masters could then teach these practices to students and apprentices. In 1970, an art school called 'Ksan was established in Gitskan territory in Hazelton, British Columbia. Many Kwakwaka'wakw and Haida artists who had previously worked on totem pole projects for the Vancouver and Victoria Museums taught at this school. Other artists from Nuuchahnulth, Tsimshian, and Coast Salish tribes also came to revive their specific artistic traditions, including Art Thompson, Ron Hamilton, Joe David, Norman Tait, Walter Harris, Susan Point and Stan Green. This was a time for reviving lost artistic styles, modernizing old styles, creating new artistic styles, like printmaking, based on traditional style, as well as altering the artistic gender roles. Changing gender roles was a huge step in this Northwest Coast Renaissance. Compared to the nineteenth century and earlier, the 1960s period marked the ability for women to take on men's traditional artistic roles, like carving and painting, and men to take on women's roles, like weaving. Many artists at 'Ksan, including Doreen Jensen and Frieda Diesing, were key in this re-evaluation of gender roles and they broke with tradition.²²⁶

²²⁵ "In Memoriam: Bill Reid (1920-1998)," Canadian Museum of History, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/aborig/reid/reid02e.shtml>.

²²⁶ Berlo and Phillips. *Native North American Art*, 205-207.

Serigraphy, a printmaking technique, became a popular medium for Northwest Coast artists creating two-dimensional works beginning in the mid-twentieth century. Ellen Neel, a Kwakwaka'wakw artist, began silk-screening designs onto silk scarves in the 1950s, which became a very popular commodity. Henry Speck, another Kwakwaka'wakw artist, created prints of mythological creatures in the 1960s, and other artists, including Art Thompson, Tony Hunt, and Robert Davidson, continued this new printing technique as well.²²⁷

Printmaking became so prominent in the Northwest Coast artistic community that in 1977, a group of Northwest Coast artists created the Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild as a way to increase the awareness of and appreciation for the art form.²²⁸ That same year, the group released the series, and published a catalogue, called *Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild, 1977 Graphics Collection* at the Vancouver Art Gallery.²²⁹ Robert Davidson, Roy Henry Vickers, and Joe David are among those who included works in the series. Originally, prints were sold at low prices due to the fact that they were not yet considered fine art. They were printed on non-archival paper and were produced in large editions. Soon, printmaking became more established and prints were then printed on archival paper and produced in smaller editions, which made them more collectable. The Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild used this idea for their series as well. The

²²⁷ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 257.

²²⁸ "The Graphic Works of Susan A. Point," The Burke Museum, accessed April 3, 2016, http://www.burkemuseum.org/static/Susan_Point_Web_Exhibit/sp%20history.html.

²²⁹ *Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild, 1977 Graphics Collection* (Ottawa: Canadian Indian Marketing Services, 1977).

guild released a second series in 1978, and a third in 1979, and by 1980, printmaking was a well-established art form.²³⁰

Many Northwest Coast artists opened galleries during this time to sell prints and other works of art from the Northwest Coast. For example, Tony and Richard Hunt and their friend John Livingstone opened *Arts of the Raven* gallery in which they sold artworks as well as trained other Kwakwaka'wakw artists and carvers of the next generation.²³¹

Like the galleries, exhibits also became important during the 1960s and 70s. Native American art, although placed into exhibits like the ones previously discussed in the 1930s and 40s, was still trying to become distinguished as art instead of artifact. Three exhibits in the 60s and 70s were momentous: the 1964 *Yakutat South: Indian Art of the Northwest Coast* exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago, the 1967 exhibit *Arts of the Raven: Masterworks of the Northwest Coast Indian* at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the 1971 *The Legacy* exhibit at the Royal British Columbia Museum (formerly the British Columbia Provincial Museum). All three exhibits displayed only Northwest Coast art. Although the first exhibit, *Yakutat South: Indian Art of the Northwest Coast*, only displayed historical artworks, the second and third exhibits, *Arts of the Raven: Masterworks of the Northwest Coast Indian* and *The Legacy* began to show works by contemporary Northwest Coast artists. *Arts of the Raven* displayed historic pieces alongside contemporary works as a way to demonstrate that Native art

²³⁰ "Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild 1977," Spirit Wrestler Gallery, accessed April 3, 2016, http://www.spiritwrestler.com/catalog/index.php?cPath=2_50.

²³¹ Ibid., 257.

could be considered fine art, and that contemporary Northwest Coast art was comparable in quality to those historical pieces. The exhibit was created by Doris Shadbolt, with the help of Bill Reid, Wilson Duff and Bill Holm, and included works by Charles Edenshaw, Tony Hunt, Henry Hunt, Doug Cranmer, Robert Davidson, Bill Reid, Bill Holm, and Lelooska Smith. The third exhibit, *The Legacy*, was one of the most prolific exhibits for contemporary Northwest Coast art. The exhibit began in 1971, and included eighty-eight contemporary works by Northwest Coast artists that were commissioned by the curator of the exhibit, Peter Macnair, who wanted to portray the success occurring at that time. It soon became a travelling exhibition and by 1984, the exhibit catalogue was published. These exhibits enabled audiences to perceive Native art as fine art. By this point, art museums also began to allocate space specifically for Native American art, including the Fenimore Art Museum, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. This finally marked a point where Native American artists were beginning to be recognized for their work.²³²

Civil rights movements were also occurring in the 1960s. Women, African Americans and other groups, along with the Native Americans, were fighting to gain equal rights. In 1968, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in order to help Natives gain the rights they deserved. Land rights, on the other hand, proved to be harder to gain. After Alaska became part of the United States in 1959, there was a period of almost a decade when land claims were uncertain. In 1971, a large oil field was found in Alaska, but because it would have had to

²³² Ibid., 282-285.

be piped through Native land, President Nixon created the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which he signed into law that same year. This law gave Natives forty-four million acres of land in Alaska as well as \$962.5 million as repayment for other land taken by the government.²³³

The political climate in Canada was another story, however. Although the anti-potlatch law had been removed from the Indian Act in 1951, the Indian Act of 1876 and the British North America Act of 1867 were still in effect and they denied Natives their rights. It was not until 1982 that First Nations were stated in the Canadian constitution as a type of citizen, and it was not until 1991 that a task force devoted to land claims was founded which included members from provincial and federal governments as well as First Nations members. This task force established the British Columbia Treaty Commission (BCTC) in 1993, which helped to settle treaty negotiations, and it still wasn't until 1998 that the Nisga'a came to an agreement in which a century of land claims were resolved.²³⁴

Included in civil rights talks was the discussion about Native American items taken from the Northwest Coast without the Natives' permission. As Natives gained more rights, they started discussing how they could receive these items back into their communities, and repatriation was the answer. Many items, including human remains and ceremonial items, were taken during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and placed into museums all over the

²³³ Ibid., 250-251.

²³⁴ Ibid., 251.

world. One of the most famous repatriations from the Northwest Coast was the return of the 'Potlatch Collection,' which was taken at the illegal 1921 Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch discussed previously. The Natives believed their ancestors were pressured into giving up their items, especially after they were given the choice of giving them up or going to jail. Thirty-three pieces were sold to George Heye, in New York, whose personal collection would become the foundation of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. Other pieces were dispersed to other museums including the Royal British Columbia Museum, the Victoria Memorial Museum (which then became the National Museum of Man and is now the Canadian Museum of History) in Ottawa, and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada.²³⁵

After the removal of the potlatch ban in 1951, Natives attempted to get these ceremonial objects repatriated. In the 1970s, they began to succeed. The National Museum Corporation's Board of Trustees agreed to return the items held in the National Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of History) on the condition that a museum be built in order to properly care for them. The U'mista Cultural Society was formed in 1974 "to ensure the survival of all aspects of the cultural heritage of the Kwakwaka'wakw."²³⁶ They decided that two museums would be built, one in Cape Mudge and one at Alert Bay. By 1975, the National Museums Assistance Program had allocated money for this project. By

²³⁵ "The Potlatch Collection History," *U'mista Cultural Society*, <http://www.umista.org/collections/>.

²³⁶ "The U'mista Cultural Society," *U'mista Cultural Society*, <http://www.umista.org/about/>

1979, the Nuymbalees Cultural Centre at Cape Mudge was built, and by 1980, the U'mista Cultural Centre was built and founded, in order to house the repatriated collection. Other museums began repatriating items from the collection as well, including the Royal Ontario Museum who returned them in 1988, as well as the National Museum of the American Indian who continued to repatriate items through 2002. Although most items have been returned there are still, most probably, objects still out there. The U'mista Cultural Society and the Kwakwaka'wakw will continue to fight for their return if and when they are found.²³⁷

As time went on, Natives began questioning why their cultural material, some of which had been taken from them, were kept in museums all over the world. In 1990, the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) was signed into law in the United States, which allows for the return of human remains and associated artifacts and items of cultural patrimony to descendent communities for reburial or repatriation and applies to museums, any state or local government, or any institution that receives federal funds in the U.S. This law forced these institutions to create a summary of all their Native American artifacts and present them to the National Parks Service and all federally recognized Indian groups within three years of the passage of the law. Museums and other cultural institutions also had to make an inventory of all Native American artifacts including any known cultural affiliations within five

²³⁷ "The Potlatch Collection History," *U'mista Cultural Society*, <http://www.umista.org/collections/>.

years.²³⁸ Native American communities were then able to put in a request to have their cultural items repatriated, and if cultural affiliation was determined, the items could be returned. As stated in the law, there are a few types of items that are allowed to be repatriated, including objects of cultural patrimony (items that were owned collectively by the tribe instead of owned by a specific individual), sacred objects (items used in religious practices for a living, active religion), funerary objects/grave goods, and human remains.²³⁹

Although NAGPRA only applies to those objects from tribal nations whose traditional territory is located in the United States, the Canadian government heard the Natives' complaints and began working towards their own solution. The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples was soon established, and in 1992, this group presented a report called *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*. Although not an actual law, like NAGPRA, *Turning the Page* was more of an "ethical understanding," and it requested that Canadian museums begin to establish mutually advantageous relationships with Natives, by repatriating requested material back to Native communities in Canada as well as allowing them access into the collections.²⁴⁰ By allowing Natives admittance into museum collections, not only does this benefit the Natives by allowing them to visit their cultural items, but the museums gain

²³⁸ *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*, Public Law 101-601, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 104 (1990): 3048-3058.

²³⁹ Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast*, 287.

²⁴⁰ The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*, (Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association and Assembly of First Nations, 1992).

information from the Natives about the items as well, furthering the museum's knowledge-base of Northwest Coast and other Native cultures. This can then be shared with the world, enabling a deeper understanding of Native cultures by all.

Natives, both in the United States and Canada, took these opportunities to have items returned to their native lands; items which they have always considered to be their property. Although animosity existed between Natives and non-Natives in the past, especially between Natives and museums, and would continue into the future and still exists today, with these new laws in place, both parties now had a reason to unite together and work towards a common goal: to learn and understand more about Native histories and cultures in order to uphold Native traditions.

Chapter IX: Contemporary Art, Public Programming and Relationships

With this new development between Natives and museums, new ideas and innovations for both groups came to the forefront. The relationship between Natives, and especially Native artists, and museums began to flourish. Since museums had to undergo a major re-development as a result of NAGPRA and *Turning the Page*, cooperation between both groups was essential.

By the end of the 1990s, Native Americans and museums were working together quite harmoniously. In the case of the Northwest Coast, Native American artists were especially contributive. This was not a new phenomenon, however, since Northwest Coast Native American artists had been using museum depositories for quite some time to learn more about their ancestral artistic traditions. This concept never fully ceased, and Native artists continued to

visit museums in order to study their cultural items, and they still continue this practice today. Jim Hart, a Northwest Coast artist, has said:

In 1982 I went to Italy. I'd heard there were some Haida pieces in museums there, and I wanted to see them. I like to go to museums to visit our pieces – it's like visiting your ancestors. In the midst of all these wonderful paintings and sculptures from different countries, different people, different artists through time, I saw Haida work, and I realized that it's just as creative and powerful as any art form out there. I was walking around proud as heck after that. Once I realized for myself the depth of our own art form, I was totally focused, and I started in very seriously.²⁴¹

Artists like Jim Hart began to realize how important their artistic heritage was, just by seeing their ancestor's work on display among some of the world's greatest artists.

Exhibits at this time were also paramount events, for example, the exhibit *Gathering Strength: New Generations in Northwest Coast Art*, which opened at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia in 1999. It explored the relationship between museums and artists and explained how the relationship supported the creation of pieces made for the museum's collection.²⁴² The introductory panel to the exhibition explained this to visitors in a more comprehensible way:

...the exhibition celebrates a remarkable period in the life and art of Northwest Coast First Nations communities...Each module tells a separate story of encounter and creativity. Together they are part of a larger story of the ongoing transmission of knowledge and artistry across generations which continued even during the dark time of official suppression. The Museum and its collections have played a role in these stories.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Chalker, Dubin, and Whiteley, *Totems to Turquoise*, 78.

²⁴² Anita Herle, "Objects of Transformation in Northwest Coast Museology," *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, No. 14 (2002): 44.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 45.

Jim Hart was also a contributor to this exhibit, and in the section 'Continuing Dialogues between Past and Present,' he is quoted as having said "'I go back all the time to the old stuff. It's my best teacher. To me that's where the strength is – and it's my job to carry on, to keep it strong in our minds.'"²⁴⁴

Another part of this same exhibit explores the Musqueam weavings and weavers. The museum was built on Musqueam land, so the relationship between the museum and Musqueam people is significant. Coast Salish weaving is a very old tradition. Many weavings had been uncovered from the area and some ended up at MOA. Since nothing was recorded about this art practice, and since European influence greatly affected the Coast Salish culture, the tradition was more or less lost and not much was known about this particular artistic style. That was until Musqueam people and aspiring weavers began to visit the museum in the 1960s to study the weavings in person to learn the art.²⁴⁵ The first weaving school was created in 1983 and included eight ambitious weavers as well as one instructor, Wendy John, who had taken a weaving class and decided to start the school to teach what she had learned.²⁴⁶ In 1997, a second weaving school at Musqueam began, this time taught by Debra and Robyn Sparrow. During this time, the weavers visited the weavings in MOA's collection many times to consult them and to learn more about the art style they were trying to revive. The women and men in this school worked hard to learn this tradition, and when the

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 46.

²⁴⁵ "Musqueam Weavers: Musqueam Weaving Through the Personal Stories of Weavers," Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia: 3-4. <http://moa.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sourcebooks-Weavers.pdf>.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 58.

Gathering Strength exhibit was being created, the Musqueam weavers were asked to be a part of it. They created a module in the exhibit called 'Weavers at Musqueam' which centered on their practice and how it has changed since the nineteenth century. As part of this exhibit, the weavers were asked what weaving meant to them and why it was so important. Janna Becker has said:

There's something about the idea that I am doing the same thing that our ancestors had done years ago, using almost the very same methods. I may have a couple more tools than they had available to them, but I am basically doing the same thing. That makes me feel really good. [...] Sometimes when I start to run out of ideas, I go down to the museum and just take a walk around. I get ideas from the older blankets. It makes me feel good that I know something that is a part of my heritage.²⁴⁷

Another weaver, Vivian Campbell, had this to say:

I realized just how much time and effort went into producing pieces like the ones that we've seen at the Museum of Anthropology. [...] It was great to be able to go as a group to the Museum and see something that was so old but preserved so well. [...] One day, maybe thirty years from now, it would be nice to find something that I've done in the Museum. It would be nice to be able to say, "Look at how well they've looked after them, it's almost as nice as when I did it." [...] It's great for Musqueam people, and all First Nations people to be able to come back and find a piece that belonged to their people, something that they may not have even known about. Those pieces are still there to tell their story, which is really important. It's a great legacy for my kids, for all kinds of Musqueam people, for all of us. That's what Salish weaving is all about.²⁴⁸

Sometimes, especially in the cases where museums are preparing specific exhibitions, the museum does not have enough information about the pieces they would like to display, and neither do the artists. In this case, Natives from the communities are consulted to gather accurate information that can be used in the exhibits. For example, for the exhibit *First Peoples: Indian Cultures in*

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.

British Columbia at the Royal British Columbia Museum, Natives were heavily consulted for the creation of the exhibit. They also obtained permission from traditional owners to display ceremonial pieces along with commissioned work by contemporary artists.²⁴⁹

Another example of Native community consultation occurred for the *Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch* exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History that opened in 1991. For this exhibit, consultation with Natives was an extensive part of the creation of the exhibit. Aldona Jonaitis, who was working on this exhibit for the museum, travelled to the Northwest Coast multiple times during the planning of the exhibit where she spoke with Kwakwaka'wakw elders who agreed to travel to New York City to look through the collections and provide insight into pieces in the collection. Even Gloria Cranmer Webster, a Kwakwaka'wakw member and a founder of the U'mista Cultural Center, curated the contemporary potlatch section of the exhibit.²⁵⁰ Natives are now often times asked to work on and become a part of the planning of these exhibits about their cultures and they are able to have meaningful input into what will be placed on display. This was very different from exhibits at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, where the Natives were bystanders more than contributors.

²⁴⁹ Herle, "Objects of Transformation," 40.

²⁵⁰ Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, "'Vitalizing the Things of the Past': Museum Representations of Native North American Art in the 1990s," *Museum Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (1992): 31.

Other important organizations were created around this time as well, such as The Bill Holm Center for the Study of Northwest Coast Art at the Burke Museum. The center, established in 2003, is devoted to the continuation of Bill Holm's work and is known as a premier center for the study of Northwest Coast Native arts. According to the Burke Museum's website, "As part of the Burke Museum's Culture Department, the center facilitates education about Northwest Native art and, through research grants, public programs, online resources and publications, supports research about and access to the Native art collections at the Burke."²⁵¹ This shows how much influence Bill Holm had on Northwest Coast Native art and museums, because his legacy brought both of them together.

Sometimes, Native artists wish to see objects in a museum collection half way across the world, but they don't have the ability to visit the museum in person. This is where other forms of visual representation come into play. This idea of the use of visual representation of Northwest Coast art to make other works of art is very significant: photographs and illustrations have been critical in the creation of art from this area going back at least to the late nineteenth century. Artists used these visuals to help them create their work, even Charles Edenshaw used photographs from the *Illustrated London News*. By the mid-1900s, artists were using books as well, including Marius Barbeau's *Totem Poles* and *Haida Myths Illustrated in Argillite Carving*, which were both written in the early 1950s, to help them carve miniature totem poles and argillite works.²⁵²

²⁵¹ "Bill Holm Center," *The Burke Museum*,
<http://www.burkemuseum.org/research-and-collections/bill-holm-center>.

²⁵² Blackman, "Facing the Future," 28.

Many books have been published with some sort of visual depiction since then, especially by museums giving insights into their own collections. Other publications not associated with museums also include photographs of museum objects. According to Margaret B. Blackman:

These publications, or at least some of them, represent the classic Northwest Coast Indian art most accessible to the contemporary carver/designer and are a critical source in the creation of contemporary Northwest Coast Indian art. In a very real way these publications have replaced the art that once stood in the villages, serving as models for today's artists producing pieces for sale or for ceremonial use.²⁵³

Many of these pieces that once stood in these villages are now in museum collections, and are then sometimes represented in publications. Museums are educational institutions and they have a reputation for sharing knowledge. When a book is published, it can have a far reaching effect; people from one side of the world who may not have the ability to travel to the other side of the world to visit pieces in museums, can use these visuals for inspiration and to gain knowledge. The fact that pieces in museum collections are being used in publications, whether they be museum related or not, and the fact that artists are looking at these books, shows how the museum is affecting the artists and their art. If the museums did not have these pieces in their collections to photograph in the first place, then they would not be spreading the information as widely as they could.

This same concept can be applied to digitized collections. There is a present push to digitize as many items as possible within certain institutions. Museums especially want to ensure that anyone can have access to the

²⁵³ Ibid.

information that they hold in their possession. Many major museums that hold Northwest Coast art have digitized collections, or are in the process of creating one, including AMNH (Figure 15),²⁵⁴ the Burke Museum (Figure 16),²⁵⁵ the U'mista Cultural Society (Figure 17)²⁵⁶ and many others. They include photographs and dimensions of the object, the culture the item is associated with, materials a piece was made out of, when and where it was collected (if that information is known), and any other important information about the object. The digitized platforms allow anyone to access a museum collection from anywhere. Although you cannot see the object in person, it is better than not having access to the object at all, and many of these databases include pieces not on display; some of these pieces would have otherwise been left hidden in storage, where not many would have a chance to view them. Sometimes this is done on purpose, because of the fragility of the pieces or light sensitivity. This digitization allows for more people to see and enjoy these pieces.

²⁵⁴ "North American Ethnographic Collection," *Division of Anthropology*, American Museum of Natural History, <http://anthro.amnh.org/north>.

²⁵⁵ "Northwest Coast Art Collections," *Ethnology*, Burke Museum, <http://collections.burkemuseum.org/ethnology/browse.php?ID=170561>.

²⁵⁶ "The U'mista Collections," *Collections*, U'mista Cultural Society, <http://www.umista.org/collections/collection.php>.

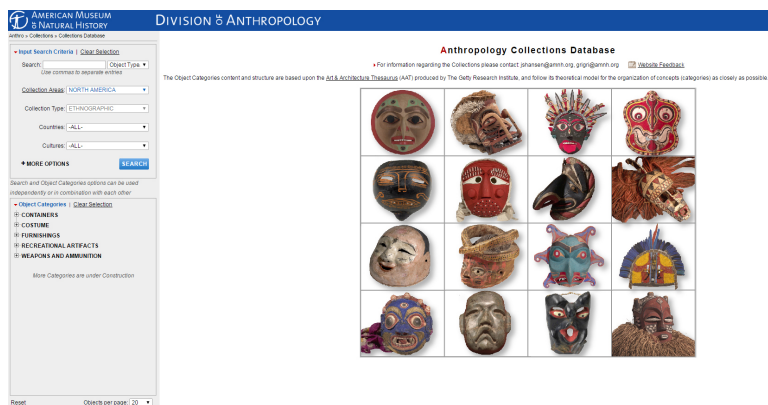


Figure 15. Screenshot of the American Museum of Natural History's Anthropology Collections Database. <https://anthro.amnh.org/north>

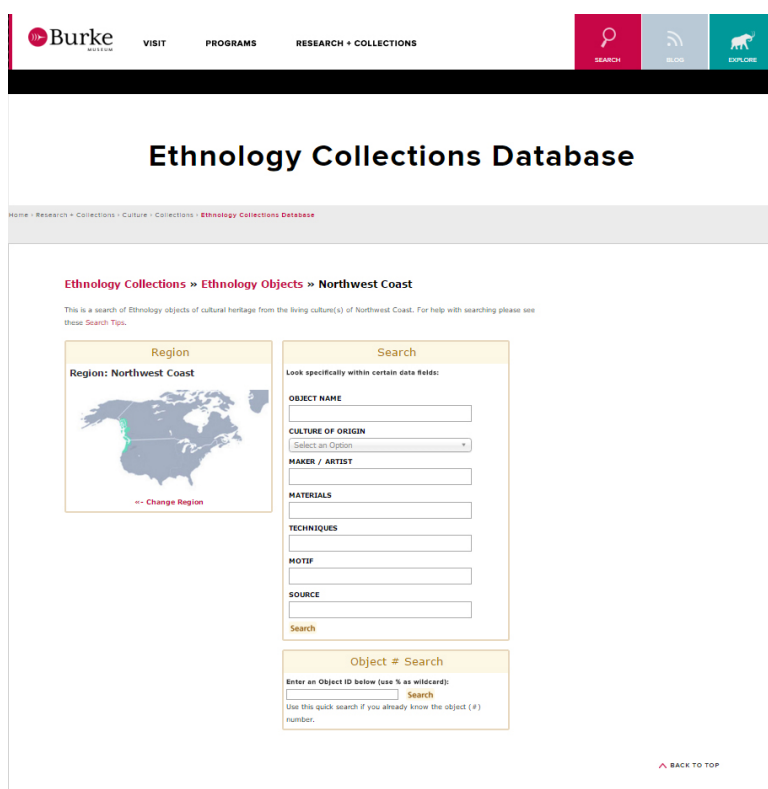


Figure 16. Screenshot of the Burke Museum's Ethnology Collections Database. <http://www.burkemuseum.org/research-and-collections/culture/collections/database/search.php?lc=nwc>



Figure 17. Screenshot of the U'mista Cultural Society's U'mista Collections. <http://www.umista.ca/exhibits/collection.php>

One especially significant database for the Northwest Coast is the Reciprocal Research Network (RRN) (Figure 18). According to their website:

The RRN is an online tool to facilitate reciprocal and collaborative research about cultural heritage from the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. The RRN enables communities, cultural institutions and researchers to work together. Members can build their own projects, collaborate on shared projects, upload files, hold discussions, research museum projects, and create social networks. For both communities and museums, the RRN is groundbreaking in facilitating communication and fostering lasting relationships between originating communities and institutions around the world.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ "About," *Reciprocal Research Network*, Musqueam Indian Band, the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council, the U'mista Cultural Society and the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, https://www.rrncommunity.org/pages/about#about_rrn.

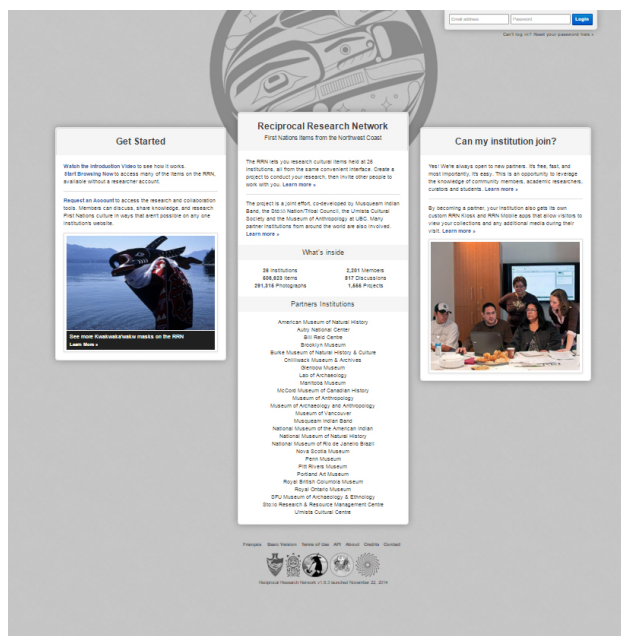


Figure 18. Screenshot of the Reciprocal Research Network's homepage. <https://www.rncommunity.org/>

Anyone can sign up to use this database, and any institution that has Northwest Coast materials can sign up to share the information that they have as well. This project facilitates partnerships; many different groups and institutions created it together. It was co-developed by the Musqueam Indian Band, the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council, the U'mista Cultural Society and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, whose Renewal Project, “A Partnership of Peoples,” included the creation of the RRN. Language, new technology, museum studies and visual culture are the main areas of research that the Renewal Project focuses on. “The RRN provides a mechanism to digitally repatriate Indigenous collections and archives,” says Anthony Shelton, Director of MOA. Shelton further says that digital efforts “will create, over time, a different arena in which researchers and people in the originating communities

interact.”²⁵⁸ As to the other areas of The Renewal Project, MOA has worked on preserving indigenous language using sound booths to record conversations between Natives about the MOA's collections:

MOA has recorded these conversations as a way to aid communities to re-encounter parts of their own culture and also as an archive for future generations. [And according to Shelton,] ‘In terms of the Museum itself, we can start recording Indigenous language terms for our collections [...] We can look at the ethno-linguistic classification of objects, which can open whole semantic universes of which they are a part. We haven’t been able to do this before.’²⁵⁹

An open storage space has also been created within the museum. This display showcases around 16,000 objects from the collection with interpretations created by both the museum and the community. This project, including the creation of the RRN, seems to be an incredibly modern approach to interacting with both the objects within museums as well as with the Natives and the community. By creating a virtual space where so much information is shared, and where a community, not just Native, but a global community, can visit to learn, add to and help one another, it is nothing less than ground-breaking. Similar sentiments are felt by Aaron Glass, Associate Professor on Native Peoples of the Northwest Coast at Bard Graduate Center. After being asked what he believed the relationship between museums, Northwest Coast Native Americans and artists would be like in the future, he explained that he thinks digital media will

²⁵⁸ Vice President Research and International, Office of the, “A Partnership of Peoples,” *Frontier: A Journal of Research and Discovery* 7, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 7, <https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/17475/A%20Partnership%20of%20Peoples.pdf?sequence=1>.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

increasingly be utilized.²⁶⁰ He believes that for the artists that are more focused on staying true to the old traditional art forms, those artists will likely take advantage of the growing digitized collections, which, as stated above, are sometimes never published in books, never put on display or never seen by anyone in person. Because of the exposure to this new information and to new objects, Glass believes we may end up seeing the effects of this exposure in these artists' work. For the Native artists moving away from the traditional art forms, Glass reasons "they're going to continue to do work that's in response to and in dialogue with global collections,"²⁶¹ for example the history of the collections, the history of the Northwest Coast art market, and critical political responses. All of the effects from the use of digitization does not directly impact just the Native artists, but everyone within the Native community, as well as anyone who has an interest in Northwest Coast cultures. The thing to remember, though, is that it all started with the art. If it were not for the items in the collections, there would be much less discussion about these specific cultures.²⁶²

Sometimes, objects in museums return to the Native communities, but not because of repatriation. At times, Natives agree certain ceremonial items should remain in a museum's collection because they may be better taken care of there, but they need to be brought back to the communities from time to time to be danced, worn or used in traditional ceremonies. For example, many masks created during the 'Northwest Coast Renaissance' are held in a special collection

²⁶⁰ Aaron Glass, interview by Karrie Myers, Bard Graduate Center, June 2, 2015.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

owned by the Royal British Columbia Museum. These pieces were specifically created and/or purchased to be used during ceremonies and can be loaned to Native communities for this purpose.²⁶³

Karen Duffek, Curator of Contemporary Visual Arts & Pacific Northwest at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, explains that they have a policy in place specifically for loaning objects back to those within Native communities who have certain rights to the objects. "MOA has a policy of preserving the 'life' of an object in addition to its physical form, which means allowing it to continue to function for living people in ceremony, and to therefore be part of life. Its story therefore continues to be built even though it is an object being preserved in a museum."²⁶⁴

She is aware of numerous cases where this has occurred, including:

- William White, Tsimshian weaver of Chilkat robes, has borrowed the child's Chilkat robe that he wove as a commission for MOA for use at several potlatches and community events, so that children in the ceremony can be properly dressed. When he wove the piece he never thought of this possibility, but has since requested it several times, and it has been worn by quite a few Kwakwaka'wakw and other children in ceremony.
- Jim Hart, Haida artist and hereditary chief, has borrowed his own raven transformation mask several times to wear in ceremony.²⁶⁵

These are examples of pieces that were carved by contemporary Native artists for the museum's collection, and were loaned back to the communities to be used during ceremonies.

- William Wasden, Jr., who is a Kwakwaka'wakw hereditary chief and accomplished artist and historian, has borrowed a particular carved headpiece for two potlatches, and has worn it both times. He has rights

²⁶³ Margaret B. Blackman, "Contemporary Northwest Coast Art for Ceremonial Use," *American Indian Art Magazine* 10, no. 3 (1985): 26.

²⁶⁴ Karen Duffek, interview by Karrie Myers, April 17, 2015.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

to that piece through heredity. He also borrowed a large whale headpiece for one of those potlatches, with the intention of carving a replica for use, but didn't end up using it. It was put on display in the community instead.

- Hutch Hunt, a Kwakwaka'wakw leader from Fort Rupert, borrowed his family's old talking stick for a big potlatch a number of years ago. It was displayed at the front of the big house beside their other talking sticks, and was carried in ceremony around the fire. [The MOA] also loaned a copper to that event, and it was laid on the ground beside the fire, along with other coppers.²⁶⁶

These borrowed pieces were traditional objects already in the museum's collection, and were returned to those in the community with hereditary rights to use or wear them. This is an especially important idea for the Northwest Coast cultures, as discussed earlier in this paper, because only certain individuals or families are allowed to use or wear specific items, especially if a piece has a particular crest on it, which is owned by a specific family.

Sometimes, however, objects are also used for political purposes:

- a talking stick in the collection was used at MOA by a First Nations leader during a "sit-in" quite a few years ago – I believe it was during the time of constitutional talks in Canada. There was a huge gathering of Aboriginal people at MOA, and they asked for a talking stick for their speeches. So in that case it was more generically used – i.e., not tied to a specific family – but was brought into a political context (like the old potlatches also were).²⁶⁷

Although this loan was not used for traditional ceremonial purposes, the symbolic use of it during this political event says a lot about the power of the use of their objects. As Duffek mentioned, this talking stick was used during Canadian constitutional talks, and the idea that the Natives were adhering to their traditions

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

and cultures as a way to produce change indicates the significance of their art in relation to their culture; their art is fundamentally embedded within their culture.

Public programming in museums is also essential when discussing the relationship between museums, Natives and artists. This is another way to learn and share new knowledge. For example, during both the public and private openings of the *Chiefly Feasts* exhibit at AMNH, a short version of a potlatch dance was performed by forty Kwakwaka'wakw members, which legitimized the exhibit, just as a real potlatch and accompanying dances would legitimize the power of the person giving the potlatch.

Other, more recent events occur frequently at museums, many locally in the Northwest Coast, as well as further away. One specific example of a recent public programming event at the Burke Museum on November 18, 2014, was for the return and unveiling of a Kwakwaka'wakw eagle mask on loan from the Hudson Museum at the University of Maine. This mask was the inspiration for the Seattle Seahawks Football logo. Once this piece was returned to the Burke Museum, and inspected by curators and Bruce Alfred, a member of the Namgis Band of Kwakwaka'wakw Nations, this piece was readied for display and a press event was planned for the unveiling. At the public unveiling, members of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation blessed the piece and performed a dance. This event brought together the museum, the Kwakwaka'wakw, and the public in a whole new way; because of the popularity of American football culture, it helped to

spread a new appreciation for Native American, and more specifically Northwest Coast, cultures and their art.²⁶⁸

Many events are occurring frequently, including cultural exchanges currently taking place at the MOA, related to the recent exhibition, *čəsnaʔəm: The City Before the City*, where Native community members came and talked about the themes in the exhibit regarding the city of Vancouver before it became Vancouver, and how the Native Musqueam people are trying to protect this land.

Much of the Northwest Coast Native public programming occurring today in museums is related to making people more aware of what is currently going on in Native communities today, and what they are trying to overcome. On the other hand, it also seems to be a way for Natives, especially Native artists, to share their knowledge with the world. These artists feel a need to share as much information as they can with others. They want to tell people that they are still here doing what their ancestors did, and they will continue to do so in order to keep moving forward into the future. This is why public programming is helpful; many different groups of people can be reached by bringing attention to these issues.

Based on the above, the relationship between museums, Northwest Coast Native Americans and artists right at the end of the twentieth century to the present seems to be an ever-increasingly beneficial one. As the years have moved forward, this relationship has evolved. As apprehensiveness in the 1990s

²⁶⁸ Cathy Morris, "Origin of the Seahawks Logo: The Story Unfolds," *Burke Museum Blog*, Burke Museum, <http://burkemuseum.blogspot.com/2015/01/the-origin-of-seahawks-logo-story.html#.ViP8byDBzGc>.

after the passage of NAGPRA and *Turning the Page* between Natives and museums subsided, a more symbiotic relationship between both groups seemed to be established. It is important to note, however, that animosity still exists between Natives and museums. For example, disagreements can occur during discussions related to repatriation requests, such as when a museum finds that an object does not fit the criteria for repatriation and does not return it to a Native community. A recent example of this occurred between the Apaches and the AMNH, when objects were not returned due to the designation of those objects. The museum is referring to them as “cultural items” and the Apaches consider them “sacred” and “items of cultural patrimony.” The museum, who did not mean to offend the Apaches, said that their designation was defined by NAGPRA.²⁶⁹ Although this still occurs, it is the hope of many that both groups can work together and have something to gain from this relationship, both for the art and the cultures, which they can accomplish through these many different means.

Chapter X: Conclusion

The relationship between museums, Northwest Coast Native Americans and artists is complex because the Northwest Coast has a long and complicated history. It was necessary to go back to the beginning to see when and how these Natives arrived on their land in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the history of the Northwest Coast cultures, and more specifically their art, since

²⁶⁹ Tom Mashberg, “Where Words Mean as Much as Objects: Apaches’ Dispute With American Museum of Natural History,” *New York Times*, August 19, 2013, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/arts/design/apaches-dispute-with-american-museum-of-natural-history.html?_r=0

their art and cultures are intertwined. Different moments in their histories have impacted the relationship in some way or form, be it good or bad, but the important factor is that the relationship today seems to be constructive and practical for all.

Native Americans have called the Americas home for thousands of years. Since they first arrived to the Northwest Coast area around 3,500 BC they had to figure out how to work the land in order to survive. The items they created going back to this time were mostly utilitarian, which they eventually added crests to.

Eventually, Europeans, and possibly Asiatic groups, made contact with these Natives in the eighteenth century. This contact was one of the first major events to occur that would have an impact on the relationship between Northwest Coast Native Americans and museums. It must be noted, however, that Native Americans on the Northwest Coast did have contact with other Indigenous groups outside the Northwest Coast region prior to the arrival of Europeans and Asians, so they were already accustomed to trading and sharing traditions. European outsiders had a considerable impact on the Northwest Coast cultures; they brought with them westernized ways, new materials, and new tools, especially ones made of metal, and these things transformed many aspects of their societies, although each culture was impacted differently. Some converted to Christianity; some were forced, but many did this of their own volition. Their art was affected by new materials, which they added to existing forms, as well as tools, and they eventually began creating art for tourists as souvenirs. Although

the Europeans brought these ideas and materials into the Natives' societies, their implementation was completed by the Natives on their own terms.

After the initial arrival of the Europeans, other groups began to settle in this area, including missionaries and others who did not understand the Natives' cultures. This caused misunderstandings and laws were put in place, like the banning of ceremonies and the potlatch. This greatly affected the Native cultures, but in different ways; some, like the Haida, accepted and followed these laws, but others, like the Kwakwaka'wakw, continued to host ceremonies by concealing them as other events that the missionaries and governments would approve of.

The next major event that affected the relationship was the beginning of collecting, especially by museums. If researchers had not visited the Northwest Coast back in the nineteenth century, a few things would most likely not be possible today: tolerance as well as the survival of Northwest Coast art. When these anthropologists, collectors and researchers began traveling into the field, they, for the most part, took the time to understand the Natives and their art instead of seeing them as different and uncivilized. Also, if they had not begun collecting their art, many of these items would not have survived until today, due to being lost, destroyed or deserted in abandoned villages where they would have decayed due to weather and time. Most of these researchers believed that Native Americans would become extinct, and that is the reason they began collecting and commissioning works in the first place. These works are now cared for in museums, and even those that have been repatriated are taken care of by community members because they understand the importance of protecting

them. Commissioned work, first associated with collecting, and then as a part of tourist and souvenir art, was valuable not only to museum collectors, but to the Native artists themselves. The artists worked alongside the museum collectors when they wanted specific works for their collections, and the artists received recognition for the high-quality works they were producing, which gave them higher statuses within their communities.

The twentieth century also had many pivotal moments. The 1921 Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch, which was broken up by authorities, showed the wrongful acts that were still occurring towards their cultures. Some participants were imprisoned and the masks and other regalia items were sold to museums. The repatriation of these ceremonial items in the 1970s and 80s, after the ban of the potlatch was lifted in the 1950s, was a crucial moment since museums acknowledged the importance of these items to their cultures and the wrongful actions that were previously taken. Also in the first half of the twentieth century, the totem pole restoration projects helped to demonstrate to the public that Natives were people like themselves and could create great works of art, just like the fine artworks on display in museums. Museum exhibits were also created to showcase Native works and was another step towards enabling the public to see their work as fine art.

The 'Northwest Coast Native American Renaissance' in the 1960s marked a period of great change. Native artists, like Bill Reid, Art Thompson, Robert Davidson, and Doreen Jensen, among many others, started to become curious about their traditional art styles. Many began visiting museums to research their

ancestral works, where museum professionals assisted them with their endeavors, and many realized the importance of the museum in caring for their cultural objects. They began creating works of art, some of which were lost art forms. Many Native artists still utilize the museums today, which shows how important this period was for the artists as well as the museums.

The passage of NAGPRA and *Turning the Page* allowed items in museum collections to be repatriated back to Native communities. Many Natives were thankful for the work the museums had done to safeguard their items, and trust between both groups increased due to the respect museums expressed towards their cultures by repatriating items from their collections.

Natives and artists continue to utilize museum collections in order to learn more about their ancestors and their traditional art forms. They do this by visiting museum collections (either in person or online using a museum's collection database), as well as borrowing items from museum collections for use in traditional ceremonies. A shared belief between Natives and museums is the idea that new knowledge needs to be communicated. When Natives learn something important about their culture, they usually want to share it with their Native communities in order to keep traditions alive, and they also want to share the information with the museum because they are the caretakers of their ancestors' works. The more knowledge museums have about the objects in their care, the better they are able to look after them, in terms of understanding their use within the culture (different knowledge is required for the conservation of objects). The museums can also keep records of what they learn from the

Natives for future generations of Natives who may visit to learn about their ancestors' works. Natives may also want to share other knowledge with the public, which is not owned by specific individuals or families. Natives and museums can work together to create exhibits and public programs with accurate information, which is shared in a way that is respectful towards their cultures.

The one thing that is constant with public programming in museums is the inclusion of the Natives and artists. Ethnological and anthropological museums and departments are special in the museum field because they often have the ability to speak directly with people to gain insight into their cultures. We must, however, keep in mind that cultural information and traditions change over time, so information gathered today may not be the same as what occurred in the past and what will occur in the future. The museums have seized this opportunity and Native Americans, especially Northwest Coast Native Americans, almost always have a presence in museum events, like the *Gathering Strength* exhibit that was at MOA, the *Totems to Turquoise* exhibit at AMNH, and the event for the unveiling of the mask used as inspiration for the Seattle Seahawks logo at the Burke Museum. This demonstrates how far this relationship has come, when not so long ago, Native Americans barely had any rights and some artists were not even associated with the works they created. Now, Northwest Coast Native Americans and artists seem to be a part of almost every step in the process of the creation of a museum exhibit, or any public event related to their cultures.

A topic for future research, in this case, would be whether many Native Americans are being hired as permanent curatorial staff, especially after exhibits,

which they were consulted for, have ended. This could be another significant next step in the relationship. There are some Native American museum professionals in the field today, including Scott Shoemaker, Curator of Native American Art, History and Culture at the Eiteljorg Museum and Deana Dartt, Curator of Native American Art at the Portland Art Museum (although she will be resigning in September 2016). Shoemaker is a member of the Miami Nation in the state of Indiana and has a B.A., an M.A. in Landscape Architecture, and a Ph.D. in American Studies, and he focuses on American Indian studies and museum studies, and is an advocate for the preservation of Miami traditional art and the Miami language.²⁷⁰ According to the Eiteljorg President and CEO, John Vanausdall, “The fact that [Shoemaker] is a Miami Indian whose culture and family occupied this region before the rest of us is especially gratifying. Further, Scott has been an invaluable cultural advisor to the museum for nearly two decades. We could not have designed a better match.”²⁷¹ Dartt is a member of the Coastal Band Chumash in California and she has her Ph.D. in Anthropology and Museum Studies.²⁷² She has completed many projects related to contemporary Native art, and acquired many pieces for the Portland Art Museum’s collection. She also helped to build relationships with local, regional

²⁷⁰ Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, “Eiteljorg Hires New Curator of Native American Art, History and Culture,” *Eiteljorg Museum*, January 26, 2015, <https://www.eiteljorg.org/interact/blog/eitelblog/2015/01/26/eiteljorg-hires-new-curator-of-native-american-art-history-and-culture>.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Mike Murawski, “New Directions – New Connections: Revitalizing a Museum’s Approach to Native American Art,” *Art Museum Teaching*, December 14, 2015, <https://artmuseumteaching.com/2015/12/14/revitalizing-native-art/>.

and national tribes.²⁷³ It would be interesting to learn whether other Native Americans are being hired by museums, and if so, what type of background and education they have. If they are not being hired, then why? Hiring Native Americans as museum professionals could potentially have a tremendously positive impact on the relationship between museums and Native Americans.

The hope for many people, including museum curators and Native Americans, is that this relationship will continue to grow and develop into the future, creating even greater mutually beneficial exchanges. Karen Duffek had this to say about the relationship and her hope for the future:

I hope it will continue to be important and vital and emotional and full of potential, and that museums will continue to learn from and build new relationships with artists in ways that help bring the collections to life and ensure the historical and contemporary works are part of life. I hope that museums will be places where our discourses about “art” and “culture” continue to develop in dialogue with communities and the academy and other kinds of art/cultural institutions, and that Indigenous epistemologies will increasingly provide frameworks of understanding for everyone.²⁷⁴

Although there are many publications regarding the Northwest Coast Native Americans and their art, as well as exhibit publications which include Native perspectives, more interviews with Natives would be beneficial to further this discussion. Although some sources highlighted Native viewpoints, asking Natives and Native artists directly if and how they utilize museums, whether it be for the advancement of their own art or for the imparting of knowledge onto others during public programming events or exhibits, would be helpful.

²⁷³ “Deana Dartt, Curator of Native American Art Steps Down,” *Portland Art Museum*, May 3, 2016, <http://portlandartmuseum.org/deana-dartt-curator-native-american-art-steps/>.

²⁷⁴ Karen Duffek, interview by Karrie Myers, April 17, 2015.

The focus of this paper was centered on museums on the North American continent. As previously discussed, collectors from European institutions also visited the Northwest Coast in the nineteenth century to obtain items for their collections. An investigation into Northwest Coast museum collections on other continents could provide an interesting perspective. Since these collections are much farther away, it would be interesting to see what these museums do when Native artists visit and how, or even if, they develop public programming on Northwest Coast cultures. The answers to these questions could determine whether more needs to be done on their parts, or if they are doing as much as, or even more than, the museums from North American museums, in which case North American museums could benefit from their endeavors.

This paper was also a case study on one specific Native American cultural region. To understand whether the conclusions made from this study regarding the relationship between museums and Northwest Coast Native Americans and artists can be applied elsewhere, other Native cultures, or any cultures in general, need to be studied. All cultures have different histories, so the relationship between them and museums today may be very different from the relationship between Northwest Coast Natives and museums. Once several other cultures are investigated, perhaps a more general conclusion can be formed.

Without the museum, we would not have the collections we have today. Museums take care of the Natives' ancestral objects and give non-Natives the opportunity to learn about these Native cultures. Also, if it were not for the

nineteenth century collectors, we probably would not understand Native traditions as much as we do today, due to their hard work collecting objects and information from Natives at that time. Although they believed that Native Americans would disappear, their contribution has impacted many people, both in the past, in the present, and will continue to do so into the future. The Natives also learned from these collectors that some non-Natives were trustworthy, and that trust has led to today where this relationship is continuously growing, using new technological advances and more access to collections than was previously available.

Northwest Coast Native American art was, and still is, embedded within Northwest Coast Indigenous cultures. During the very early periods, many of the Natives were skilled at making items for everyday use, because they needed to be. Today, this is not the case, but the artists in the Native communities play a major role, making ceremonial items for use by specific families based on the crests they add. Since not everyone can make these items, these artists are held in very high regard and many Natives commission them to make new items to use and wear during ceremonies. Jim Hart has said, "As an artist, you're an ambassador for your people, because this art represents all our people. So the art is healing, because we believe in it so much."²⁷⁵ They also make items for commercial sale to non-Natives, and this enables the non-Natives to appreciate their cultures as well. The Natives and artists who have had such a long and

²⁷⁵ Chalker, Dubin, and Whiteley, *Totems to Turquoise*, 79.

sometimes difficult past are now getting the rightful attention and praise they deserve.

Their art is their culture and their culture is their art; since their art is so meaningful, so too are the artists. Museums appear to understand this concept quite well, through their long-standing interactions with them. Since this paper is about the people just as much as it is about their art, it seems only fair to end with the words of a Native Northwest Coast artist, Norman Tait: "Once I asked Bill Holm to explain Nisga'a art to me. I was quite honored when he turned to me and said, 'You're Nisga'a art.'"²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 80.

Bibliography

- "About." *Reciprocal Research Network*. Musqueam Indian Band, the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council, the U'mista Cultural Society and the Museum of Anthropology at UBC.
https://www.rrncommunity.org/pages/about#about_rrn.
- An Act Further to Amend "The Indian Act, 1880," *Statutes of Canada* 1884 (47 Vict.), chap. 27, sec. 3.
- Baird, Spencer to Joseph Swan. May 5, 1882. Spencer Baird to John J. McLean. May 5, 1882. RU 33, v. 122. Quoted in Cole, Douglas. *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.
- Berlo, Janet Catherine. "The Formative Years of Native American Art History." In *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting*, edited by Janet Catherine Berlo, 1-21. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992.
- Berlo, Janet C. and Ruth B. Phillips. *Native North American Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Berlo, Janet C. and Ruth B. Phillips. "'Vitalizing the Things of the Past': Museum Representations of Native North American Art in the 1990s." *Museum Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (1992): 29-43.
- "Bill Holm Center," *The Burke Museum*, <http://www.burkemuseum.org/research-and-collections/bill-holm-center>.
- Blackman, Margaret B. "Contemporary Northwest Coast Art for Ceremonial Use." *American Indian Art Magazine* 10, no. 3 (1985): 24-37.
- Blackman, Margaret B. "Creativity in Acculturation: Art, Architecture and Ceremony from the Northwest Coast." *Ethnohistory* 23, no. 4 (Autumn, 1976): 387-413.
- Blackman, Margaret B. "Facing the Future, Envisioning the Past: Visual Literature and Contemporary Northwest Coast Masks." *Arctic Anthropology* 27, no. 2 (1990): 27-39.
- Boas, Franz. "Museums of ethnology and their classification." *Science* IX, no. 229 (June 24, 1887): 612-614.
- Boas, Franz. *Primitive Art*. New York: Dover Publications, 1927.

- Browarny, Laura. 2010. "Art, Artifact, Anthropology: The Display and Interpretation of Native American Material Culture in North American Museums." Master's thesis, Seton Hall University. Accessed March 13, 2016. <http://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1736&context=dissertations>.
- Bruchac, Margaret M. "My Sisters Will Not Speak: Boas, Hunt and the Ethnographic Silencing of First Nations Women." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 57, no. 2 (2014): 153-171.
- The Burke Museum. "The Graphic Works of Susan A. Point." The Burke Museum. Accessed April 3, 2016. http://www.burkemuseum.org/static/Susan_Point_Web_Exhibit/sp%20history.html.
- The Burke Museum. 2015. "Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form." The Burke Museum, April 1. Accessed March 12, 2016. <http://www.burkemuseum.org/blog/northwest-coast-indian-art-analysis-form>.
- Canadian Museum of History. "In Memoriam: Bill Reid (1920-1998)." Canadian Museum of History. Accessed April 3, 2016. <http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/reid/reid02e.shtml>.
- Chalker, Kari, Lois S. Dubin, and Peter M. Whiteley, eds. *Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004.
- Cole, Douglas. *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.
- "Coqualeetza Industrial Institute." The Children Remembered. Accessed August 24, 2016. <http://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-locations/coqualeetza/>.
- "Deana Dartt, Curator of Native American Art Steps Down," *Portland Art Museum*, May 3, 2016, <http://portlandartmuseum.org/deana-dartt-curator-native-american-art-steps/>.
- De Laguna, Frederica. "Mungo Martin 1879-1962." *American Anthropologist*. 65. no. 4 (Aug., 1963).
- Douglas, Frederic H., and René D'Harnoncourt. *Indian Art of the United States*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941. Quoted in Jonaitis, Aldona. *From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History*. New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1988.

- Douglas & McIntyre. *Aldona Jonaitis*.
<http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com/author/aldona-jonaitis>.
- Douglas & McIntyre. *Margaret B. Blackman*.
<http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com/author/margaret-b-blackman>.
- Duffek, Karen. Interview by Karrie Myers. April 17, 2015.
- Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. "Eiteljorg Hires New Curator of Native American Art, History and Culture." *Eiteljorg Museum*. January 26, 2015.
<https://www.eiteljorg.org/interact/blog/eitelblog/2015/01/26/eiteljorg-hires-new-curator-of-native-american-art-history-and-culture>.
- Fane, Diana. "New Questions for 'Old Things': The Brooklyn Museum's Zuni Collection." In *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting*, edited by Janet Catherine Berlo, 62-87. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992.
- "Franz Boas." *Department of Anthropology*. Columbia University.
<http://anthropology.columbia.edu/department-history/franz-boas>.
- Glass, Aaron. Interview by Karrie Myers. Bard Graduate Center. June 2, 2015.
- Gunther, Erna. *Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians*. Portland: The Portland Art Museum, 1966.
- Hawthorn, Harry B. *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1965.
- Herle, Anita. "Objects of Transformation in Northwest Coast Museology." *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, No. 14 (2002): 38-59.
- Holm, Bill. *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965.
- Holm, Bill. *Smoky-Top: The Art and Times of Willie Seaweed*. Washington: The University of Washington Press, 1983.
- Hoover, Alan L., Peter L. Macnair, and Kevin Neary. *The Legacy: Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984.
- The Indian Act, 1876. *Statutes of Canada* 1876, chap. 18.

- Jacknis, Ira. "Towards An Art History of Northwest Coast First Nations." *BC Studies*, no. 135 (Autumn 2002): 47-53, 93-100 and 137-143.
- Jonatis, Aldona. *Art of the Northwest Coast*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006.
- Jonaitis, Aldona. *From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History*. New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1988.
- Kimmelman, Michael. 1989. "Indian Art vs. Artifact: Problem of Ambiguity." *New York Times*, May 1. Accessed March 9, 2016.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/01/arts/indian-art-vs-artifact-problem-of-ambiguity.html>.
- MacDonald, George F. *Haida Monumental Art: Villages of the Queen Charlotte Islands*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994.
- Mashberg, Tom. 2013. "Where Words Mean as Much as Objects: Apaches' Dispute With American Museum of Natural History." *New York Times*, August 19. Accessed April 6, 2016.
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/arts/design/apaches-dispute-with-american-museum-of-natural-history.html?_r=0
- Morris, Cathy. "Origin of the Seahawks Logo: The Story Unfolds." *Burke Museum Blog*. Burke Museum.
<http://burkemuseum.blogspot.com/2015/01/the-origin-of-seahawks-logo-story.html#.ViP8byDBzGc>.
- Muir, John. *Travels in Alaska*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979, 293. Quoted in Jonatis, Aldona. *Art of the Northwest Coast*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006.
- Murawski, Mike. "New Directions – New Connections: Revitalizing a Museum's Approach to Native American Art." *Art Museum Teaching*. December 14, 2015. <https://artmuseumteaching.com/2015/12/14/revitalizing-native-art/>.
- "Musqueam Weavers: Musqueam Weaving Through the Personal Stories of Weavers." Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia.
<http://moa.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sourcebooks-Weavers.pdf>.
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*, Public Law 101-601, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 104 (1990): 3048-3058.
- Neel, David. "Charlie James." David Neel Studio. Accessed April 2, 2016.
<http://www.davidneel.com/charlie-james-a-13.html>.

Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild, 1977 Graphics Collection. Ottawa: Canadian Indian Marketing Services, 1977.

"Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild 1977." Spirit Wrestler Gallery. Accessed April 3, 2016.
http://www.spiritwrestler.com/catalog/index.php?cPath=2_50.

"The Potlatch Collection History," *U'mista Cultural Society*,
<http://www.umista.org/collections/>.

Rushing, W. Jackson. "Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern: René D'Harnoncourt and 'Indian Art of the United States.'" In *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting*, edited by Janet Catherine Berlo, 191-236. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992.

Samuel, Cheryl. *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket*. Seattle: Pacific Search Press, 1982.

Samuel, Cheryl. *The Raven's Tail*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987.

Stewart, Hilary. *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979.

Swan, James to Spencer Baird. February, 22, 1873. RU 53, v. 47. Quoted in Cole, Douglas. *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.

The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples. *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*. Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association and Assembly of First Nations, 1992.

Tippett, Maria. *Bill Reid: The Making of an Indian*. Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 2003.

"The U'mista Cultural Society." *U'mista Cultural Society*,
<http://www.umista.org/about/index.php>.

University of Alaska. *Organizational Charts & Biographies*.
<http://www.alaska.edu/orgcharts/uaf-chancellor/vc-acad-affairs/dir-ua-museum/>.

Vice President Research and International, Office of the. "A Partnership of Peoples." *Frontier: A Journal of Research and Discovery* 7, no. 2

(Fall/Winter 2009): 5-8.

<https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/17475/A%20Partnership%20of%20Peoples.pdf?sequence=1>.

Wan, LiLynn. "A Nation of Artists: Alice Ravenhill and the British Columbia Society for the Furtherance of Indian Arts and Crafts." *BC Studies*, no. 178 (Summer 2013): 51-70.

Wright, Robin K. Review of *The Legacy: Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art* by Alan L. Hoover, Peter L. Macnair, and Kevin Neary. *American Indian Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (Spring, 1987): 169-170.